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FIRST THINGS

August/September 1990
Number Five

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

Worldly Wisdom, Christian Foolishness
Peter L. Berger

Wealth and Whimsy: On Economic Creativity
Richard John Neuhaus

How to Think About the Family
David Blankenhorn

Religion and the Life of Learning
Mark R. Schwehn

The Orthodox Jew as Intellectual Crank
David Singer

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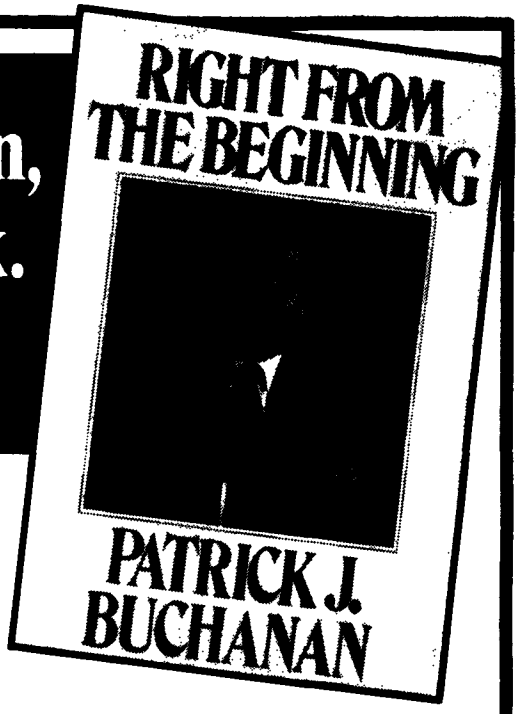

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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

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Christians and Development

Amy Sherman's article "Christians and Economic Development" (March) contributes no new insights to the ongoing discussion about the Church's participation in the international development effort. The evaluation and judgments of the so-called "oldline" and "evangelical" understandings and views are grossly inadequate. The comprehensive analysis of the so-called "capitalist" and "socialist" models is extremely inadequate and narrow because it ignores completely the many-faceted external forces that have impacted the development efforts of developing countries regardless of the economic and political models they espouse. For example, the ideological struggle or so-called cold war in the wake of the Second World War has included deliberate economic blockades and covert action against developing countries that are used as surrogates in the Superpower rivalry. In many cases such countries have been reluctantly forced to allow their societies to be militarized by the Superpowers, and this has greatly retarded their development.

Colonialization of the Third World is another factor that has restricted development in the post-colonial period among developing countries. There are many examples in the developing world where both capitalist and socialist economies are not doing well. The causes have a lot to do with political and economic forces manipulated by vested interests at the international level. It is also important to point out that many of the so-called capitalist countries that are emerging as economic powers, e.g., South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand, have been spared the destructiveness of colonization and have been recipients of massive amounts of aid from other capitalist countries, particularly the United States.

There have been significant economic failures during the history of the United States, e.g., the Great Depression and the growing homeless population today. If one looks at the ebb and flow of both the capitalist and socialist models there is probably no point where it is possible to say definitively that one model is superior to the other. In the wake of the collapse of socialist economies in Eastern Europe many persons are gloating over the alleged failure of socialist economic theory and practice. Yet in some capitalist economies, including the United States, there are some troubling signs and trends, e.g., unfettered consumption, indebtedness, and individualism, that could lead to eventual collapse of these economies.

No useful purpose is served at this state in the discussion to write and publish superficial analyses on different points of view among North American Christians that are not significantly different anyway. It only drives the wedge deeper between Christians. Rather than engaging in this kind of ideological debate and advocating a particular economic ideology, Christians in the West need to join with Christians in the developing countries to identify both the internal and external forces that are retarding development in their countries and work cooperatively with them to remove the constraints.

The biblical concepts of jubilee, shalom, and kingdom of God should compel Christians to transcend political ideologies and theological rivalry and faithfully carry on a prophetic role in the world. To align ourselves with a particular political and economic ideology will likely result in our biblical theology being held hostage. The priority debate for Christians today and in the coming decades is how to create the Kingdom of God on earth. If we are successful at this endeavor it will take us beyond conventional political and economic thinking into new models to responsibly and equitably share the earth's resources.

Ronald Yoder
Goshen, IN

Amy Sherman responds:

Ronald Yoder's critique of my article raises at least five significant issues.

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First, Yoder charges that my analysis is "inadequate . . . because it ignores completely the many-faceted external forces that have impacted the development efforts of [LDCs] regardless of the economic and political models they espouse." Apparently, Yoder believes that the fundamental causes of third world underdevelopment lie in *external* factors. While these (global economic health, protectionism, commodity prices, etc.) do have a significant effect, the keys to success lie in how LDCs *respond* to such forces, i.e., in their *internal* policies. Some internal policies—for example, export diversification—give some developing countries a better resiliency to face adverse world market conditions.

Second, Yoder argues that colonialism is another factor (presumably ignored by me) that has "restricted development in the post-colonial period." Although I am no apologist for colonialism, I recognize that empirical analysis (for example, that of P. T. Bauer) suggests that LDCs that experienced the most contact with Western imperialism are today, relatively speaking, better off economically than those that had no contact. Colonialism certainly brought many evils to third world countries; nevertheless, even Marx and Engels admitted that imperialism also brought them economic benefits. Blaming colonialism for third world poverty seems to assume that the region was well-off before colonialization. But underdevelopment is the natural state of societies, and development the "exception." The real question—as Adam Smith noted in 1776—is not what makes poverty but what creates wealth.

As to Yoder's implied suggestion that the relatively prosperous East Asian capitalist countries have been successful because they have received "massive amounts" of economic assistance, it should only be noted that other LDCs have also received massive aid. Indeed, the OECD reports that a net transfer of $1.8 trillion from the First to Third worlds has occurred from 1956 to 1986. Ghanian scholar George Ayittey reports that some $11 billion of Western assistance flows annually into Africa—but we do not see evidence of successful development there. We must ask: Why have some societies risen out of LDC status, while others remain poor? The answer lies primarily *not* in levels of foreign aid or colonial experience, but in the different internal economic policies adopted by different nations, which brings me to Yoder's third and most disturbing observation.

Yoder asserts that it is impossible to say "definitively" whether capitalism or socialism is the superior economic model. But as I noted in my article, the eleven countries with the *worst* records in terms of material welfare (including Mozambique, Mali, Chad, Niger, and Zaire) follow heavily statist policies. Surveying the diverse development experiences of LDCs, Peter Berger wrote in 1984 that "socialism is a mirage that leads nowhere, except to economic stagnation, collective poverty, and various degrees of tyranny" and that "capitalism has been dramatically successful, if in a limited number of underdeveloped countries." Noting that capitalist models have also failed in some LDCs, Berger posits simply that development practitioners are much safer betting on capitalism. This is not ideological excess but simple historical fact. As a recent article in the *Economist* suggested, the clearest lessons we can draw from thirty years of diverse development experiences are that continued underdevelopment is a result of multiple factors, the most important being internal government monetary, fiscal, trade, and agricultural policies, as well as cultural attitudes, political stability, respect for the rule of law, and the level of corruption and bureaucratic/legal "red tape." Governments that have followed statist/socialist models remain poor; countries that have graduated out of LDC status adopted capitalist/free market models.

Moreover, Yoders appears to equate the "alleged failure" (alleged?) of socialist economies with the thorny problems existing in capitalist USA ("unfettered consumption, individualism"), as if to suggest that each economic model has equally compelling flaws. But a determined commitment to the poor requires distinguishing between problems existing in statist LDCs (famine, massive unemployment, malnutrition, grinding poverty) and the materialism of the West. Rejecting capitalism because it threatens to bring the evil of consumerism to a nation seems a strange way to help poor people who are far more concerned about meeting their basic needs and having an opportunity for economic advancement than they are about the corruptions of materialism. . . .

Fourth, Yoder makes the positive suggestion that First World Christians should join with Third World Christians in examining the problems of the South. I agree—but the problem is that the oldline church listens only to *some* Third World voices (the liberation theologians) while appearing ignorant of those arguing against state-dominated models and in favor of free market approaches (for example, Hernando de Soto, Alejandro Chafuen, Julio Cole, and Manuel Ayau—to name just a few from Latin America).

Finally, Yoder correctly notes that Christians must avoid having their biblical theology held hostage to preconceived economic and political ideologies. Nowhere did I argue that capitalism is the Bible's way—rather, I suggested that key biblical principles (such as recognition of private property, the value of stewardship, and creativity) better "fit" with capitalist theories than with socialist. Moreover, at this point the chief violators of Yoder's dictum are from the oldline and left wing of the evangelical movement, as evidenced in their document *The Road to Damascus*, which asserted that those Christians who disagree with liberation theology and dependency theory are guilty of "apostasy—the abandonment of the gospel of Jesus Christ." As Catholic theologian George Weigel commented, the document is a prime example of "radical politicization of the gospel"—precisely what Yoder condemns.

Yoder is an example of those

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Christians who still search for a nebulous, non-existent "third way" toward development (what he calls "new models" beyond conventional economic thinking). We must do better for the poor by advocating the one model—capitalism—that has had at least some success in improving their lot.

Feminism and the Church

The commentary by Richard John Neuhaus ("The Feminist Faith," April) evades the point raised by feminist discussions of Christianity—which is that at present women in the Church are not considered the equal of men—and given the viewpoint of your journal, I'm wondering if that evasion was inadvertent or intentional.

As I see it, the Rev. Carter Heyward and the other radical feminists who push a post-Christian ideology are a symptom of a very real and very deep problem within Christendom, and that is the simple ignorance, trivialization, and marginalization of women within Christianity for most of its life. Now, women all over are awakening to the reality that they too are children of God, entitled to stand beside men in praise of God's glory and honor, and what do they discover? A Church which as a whole continues to quash women and relegate us to second-class positions. When we day by day must deal with sexist language and imagery in the liturgy, and the refusal to allow women to assume meaningful roles in the Church—which in my Church, the Roman Catholic Church, includes denying women the ability to become priests—it hurts, it really hurts. There are times when I, like the Rev. Heyward and other radical feminists, would like to throw out the baby with the bathwater, but I find my commitment to Jesus Christ and the Christian faith to be far too strong to allow for the easy "out" of leaving the Church in all but name, as the radical feminists appear to have done. I, and many others, are staying, but we're not content to merely watch and wait from the sidelines.

The Rev. Heyward and others in the radical feminist camp have chosen not to wait and have ventured beyond the fringes of the Christian faith. However, I cannot *in toto* fault these women for what they have done, and in fact I am sympathetic to the reasons why they crossed the frontiers of the faith. In their anger at the unchanging, uncompromising sexism inherent in the Church today, they have decided not to wait for change, but are instead pursuing their "post-christian" [sic] path. This is truly a sad state of affairs, one brought on by the Church itself when it refused (and refuses) even to merely reconsider "rearranging the theological furniture," as Heyward herself says. . . .

This unhappy situation is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, which is the saddest part of the rise of the so-called "feminist faith." So long as the Church continues to ignore the real, legitimate cries of women to be counted as whole members of the Body of Christ, there will continue to be a slow bleed of women away from the Church. And while it is true that the Rev. Heyward and others can be criticized for going too far, such criticism does not release the Church from the even more urgent criticism that it *must* get its house in order as far as women are concerned. We've already waited far too long as it is—nearly two millenia—for the brethren of the Church to start treating us as Jesus did. (And if you're not sure how Jesus treated women, I would suggest reading the Gospels again!)

As for "The Feminist Faith," you can see from what I have said that I find the analysis there sorely lacking. The "feminist faith," as it were, is not a creature of some theological seminary *cum* hothouse, as you seem to imply. Rather, it is born of the very real concerns women have about their standing in the Church, and it is doubtful that these concerns would disappear even if every woman now in a seminary were to leave tomorrow. You would do well to address the *real* concerns of women and the Church, instead of automatically bashing heretics (so-called) and making light of their complaint. . . .

Deana Marie Holmes
Austin, TX

Privatize the Schools

Samuel Rabinove's arguments ("Separationism for Religion's Sake," May) for continued and rigorous separation of public education and religion seem to me definitive. It's hard to believe American jurists would find in a different direction in any legal action involving separation that might come before them. But to say that does not solve the problem; it reveals what the problem is.

The problem is that effective schools have always been based on a strong, religiously based ethical code. History offers no examples of anything else, and our own curious experience of spending ever more per pupil for apparently ever more discouraging average results clearly does not offer an exception.

The serious decline in quality has come as we have done two things chiefly: (1) broadened the educational base to include everybody, and (2) eliminated any endorsement of religion from the schools, with a consequent and inevitable weakening of moral instruction. It would be improper to conclude that these two big changes brought on the decline, but they become prime suspects.

I think our public schools have been as good as they have been for so long because the force of the Protestant Christian code underlying them, so strong to begin with, has lingered a long time, even under continuing philosophical attack from various quarters, and despite ever more rigorous insistence on "separation."

It is too late to go back to the original American mode, in which government money went to religious and private schools because they were the only schools there were. As Rabinove clearly sees, it would be productive of nothing but social disharmony to try to figure out some way sectarian schools can in the future muscle in on the tax dollar more than they (perhaps unconsti-

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tutionally) have already.

Stalemate but not checkmate for those of us who believe education must be religiously centered to be effective.

The non-religious or irreligious, socialistic, bureaucratic public school system grows ever more expensive and ever less effective—so say all the news reports. Even the educators' own unions say something to that effect but propose more of the medicine that hasn't worked in the past to achieve a cure in the future. Private schools, often sectarian, are everywhere showing up as cheaper and more effective alternatives.

The answer, evidently, is to privatize the entire school system. Unthinkable? Impossible? Ponder the recent experiences east of the (former) Berlin Wall.

End socialism in education. It works no better there than anywhere else. Give freedom and the market a chance. What have we to lose but the chains of ignorance?

Sell off the entire public school system. Let there be ten thousand points of educative light. Sell school buildings to sects—"Jewish, Catholic, Lutheran, Hare Krishna, or whatever"—and to secular management groups made up of parents, teachers, and administrators. Sell them to anyone with moxie enough to get in the act. Let government review the standards as it does for various other private systems, for example, banks, and let the market (parent and student choice) reveal the best schools. . . .

The answer to our current problems isn't to stagger forward with a religionless education that offers no hope. It is to foreclose a bankrupt business and start over. Hope abounds.

Tom White
Odessa, TX

Theonomy and Scripture

It is instructive, and revealing of his own priorities, that in his hierarchy of concerns about theonomy ("Why Wait for the Kingdom? The Theonomist Temptation," May), Richard John Neuhaus doesn't bring God's Word to bear on this subject until, literally, the last paragraph of his article. And then, alas, his use of Galatians 3:1-3 is incorrect and misleading.

The "foolishness" St. Paul is denouncing in these passages is the erroneous belief that one is made righteous by "works of the law." He is not denouncing the view that God's Law is still in effect, for all time, for all people, in all areas of life. Indeed, in Romans 7:12, St. Paul declares God's Law to be "holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

As for Brother Neuhaus' assertion that the "overweening presumption that one is doing the will of God so unequivocally that others must be either converted or destroyed cannot help but result in the seductions of proud power or the equally pernicious seductions of angry powerlessness," I disagree. After all, it was our Lord Himself who said that sinners must repent or perish (Luke 13:3,5). The Apostles and the Early Church also preached this message—and rather successfully, I think.

In fact, it was Jesus Christ who said, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, that: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)—an assertion which sounds vaguely theonomical, does it not?

John Lofton
Laurel, MD

Theology & the Middle East

Michael Wyschogrod complains ("The Bishops and the Middle East," April) that the Catholic bishops failed to employ theological arguments in their paper on the Palestinian issue.

Somehow I think that if the bishops *had* used theological arguments, Wyschogrod or someone else would certainly have found that objectionable.

It is not likely that the Church "lost its theological nerve" on this issue, but rather that the bishops realized that at this point in history, it is the Church's humanistic philosophy that is more likely to win a hearing.

Richard M. Harnett
So. San Francisco, CA

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FIRST THINGS
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1990

Equality After Socialism

Socialism is dead, and, except within certain academic and religious circles, there will be few mourners. A system that in Marx's vision would result in economic abundance and political liberation wound up in practice as economically ruinous and politically tyrannical. The world is well rid of it.

But if socialism as a way of organizing a nation's political economy has entirely lost credibility, something of its moral attraction remains. Indeed, for a great many people socialism—especially in recent years—has meant not so much a paradigm for arranging a social system as an appeal to the moral ideal of equality. That has been its lure: its ability to tap into moral instincts that long predate and in no way depend on the particular details of Marx's analysis of modern economic arrangements. It is the idea of socialism as moral decency—which is to say equality—that explains why so many people could for so long hold so intensely to such an implausible doctrine.

It is difficult to conceive of a moral system adequate to modern conceptions of justice that would not, in one way or another, focus on the idea of equality. But that is precisely the problem: what, beyond a gauzy sentimentality, do we mean by equality? And how do we spell out our conceptions of equality in our social arrangements?

As in so many areas of moral/political analysis, our clearest guideposts are negative. We cannot mean by equality socially legislated equality of economic condition. As the post-1945 history of Eastern Europe most recently reminds us, such equality can only mean equality of poverty for all (and not even that—the *nomenklatura* were always more equal than others). The gate to the egalitarian utopia is barred: if we wish prosperity for the population in general, the dynamics of such prosperity require some degree of inequality among individuals within the population. The rising tide of a productive economy lifts most boats, but it does not lift them equally. Differences of ability and effort affect individual outcomes, and while social policy need not regard the patterns of those unequal outcomes as beyond the bounds of legitimate intervention, attempts to modify them radically will do harm to the functioning of the system itself and thus to all who work within it.

Social policy that begins with the assumption that our natural condition is economic equality and that deviations from that equality must suggest injustice will almost certainly lead in misguided and counterproductive directions. Inequality *may* indicate inequity, but—much populist sentimentality notwithstanding—it does not do so necessarily. The notion of tradeoffs between equality and efficiency arises not from the calculating imaginations of the coldhearted but from the nature of economic activity itself.

Americans have in fact seldom thought of equality in terms of equality of condition. They have thought rather of equality of opportunity, and have identified the struggle for equality with removal of barriers to free competition. Most Americans can live comfortably with quite lopsided results in the competition for economic advantage—assuming a floor of minimum economic provision for all—as long as they can feel assured that the rules of the game have not been rigged against them and have been reasonably adhered to in practice. To vary the metaphor, they identify national material well-being not with the carving of ever more equal slices from an economic pie of constant size but with providing conditions under which the pie will dependably expand and from which all will therefore benefit regardless of disparities in the relative size of individual slices.

But if most Americans have been generally relaxed with regard to matters of economic equality, they have cared intensely about equal dignity. They do not object if some among them have more wealth or acclaim than others, but they object most strenuously if those so advantaged take such circumstances as signs of superior value or significance. The American passion for equality has to do with ideas of equal worth, not equal situation. It assumes equality before the law, equal respect, equal consideration. Americans typically combine commonsense recognition of actual differences in ability and effort among people with a profound sense that those differences, legitimately manifest in economic disparities, provide neither a license for special privilege nor an intrinsic measure

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of human worth.

But how are we to ground our notions of equal human worth? The most obvious empirical reality about human beings is our inequality. We are equal neither in intelligence, physical attractiveness, wisdom, force of personality, shrewdness, virtue, or any of a host of other fundamental attributes. Those inequalities are not necessarily cumulative, but neither do they automatically cancel each other out. We surely cannot rely on any theory of equality that requires us to tell lies to and about each other as to the way we are constituted. Nor do any but the willfully self-deluded believe that our inequalities can either be fully accounted for or effectively made inoperative by our social arrangements.

The American Founders, as in so many other things, had this matter right. The American proposition has to do most fundamentally with equality—an equality rooted not in empirical circumstance, but in transcendent affirmation. We are, our Declaration reminds us, *created* equal: our equality is, quite literally, God-given. It is bestowed on us—not acquired, not earned, not dependent on normal reckonings of human worth. Our equality is an endowment, a gift. The Judeo-Christian biblical tradition that undergirds the American experience gives equality the most secure basis it could possibly have: we are equal, it tells us, because God made us that way.

Most Americans continue to share that affirmation, which may be one reason our society has been more resistant than most to the blandishments of socialism. The sense of transcendence has persisted among us, and so we have been less susceptible to dubious secular constructions of human equality that the inroads of modernity have elsewhere made more attractive. The idea of equality, so essential to social decency and yet—humanly speaking—so counterintuitive, will continue to find its most secure basis in affirmations of a transcendent reality under which all humans are—equally—constituted. It is in the end only in the economy of God that human equality can be made to be a plausible, let alone compelling, proposition.

Democracy and Obscenity

The nation braces itself for yet another round of moral indignation against moral indignation. The first indignation is that of publishers, booksellers, and sundry civil libertarians in a state of alarm about the second group of indignants who are doing battle against smut. The first indignants howl "Censorship!" and the second come back with the claim that they are only exercising their democratic rights. The Rev. Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association puts it this way: "The only people I know that can censor is the Government. Booksellers can sell anything they want to sell. But if they elect to carry pornography, we elect not to do business with them. We also elect to encourage people not to trade with them, through mailings and other means. We have a constitutional right to do that."

As best the etymologists can make it out, "obscenity" comes from the Latin *ob* and *caenum*, meaning "to filth." A community that cannot recognize what is filthy and depraved is a community that cannot recognize what is healthy and virtuous. Maybe that is the kind of community we have become as a nation, but there are many communities in this nation that are not resigned to going along. Wildmon and others are simply using the mechanisms of the market place to express their consumer preferences, which happen also to be their moral judgments. Libertarian hysteria to the contrary notwithstanding, acting on the basis of moral judgment is neither unconstitutional nor un-American. If through consumer boycotts and other mechanisms publishers and booksellers begin to feel the pinch, it is the pinch of democracy in action.

A different order of questions is raised when we move from boycotts and other voluntary actions to employing the coercive force of law. Commonly, and understandably, these questions come up in connection with schools and the materials to which children are exposed. It is almost unavoidable that sometimes censorship will be misguided. In Empire, California, for instance, four hundred copies of *Little Red Riding Hood* have been put in storage because this telling of the Grimm fairy tale has her taking a bottle of wine to her grandmother, and that, according to a school official, "condones the use of alcohol." Our enprincipled position is that grandma is entitled to her occasional nip, but apparently that position has not carried the day with the school board of Empire.

Is the school board exercising censorship? We certainly hope so. If another etymological aside is permitted, "censorship" is from *censere*, which means to assess or oversee. That is precisely what school boards are supposed to do. They will frequently make mistakes in doing so, but if they stop assessing and overseeing, we might as well get rid not only of school boards but of schools. Only the most fanatical libertarian believes that, with respect to the socializing of children, anything goes. That is, in fact, not libertarianism but nihilism. Censorship is essential not only to education but to the civilization project itself. The genius of our society is not in its abandonment of censorship but in its institutional arrangements aimed at making sure that assessing and overseeing will be done in a way that is democratically accountable. According to those arrangements, the one thing that cannot be censored is public argument over the

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arrangements themselves.

Although the courts go back and forth on this, there are also "community standards" that may determine whether some materials are available for sale to adults. Without standards there can be no community. The many communities in the nation have a "thicker" description than the "thin" reality called the national community. To be a community is to be self-defined in relation to other communities. The proponents of nationalizing all communal standards are in fact the enemies of the democratic pluralism that they purport to defend. To give public expression to their standards, some communities will restrict the peddling of pornography. That also explains why in some places the whorehouse is on the other side of the county line. Those who feel oppressed by what they call "parochialism" may not be happy in such communities. That is one reason why, from time immemorial, people have moved to cities. That is also why, even in small towns, sales counters have an underside as well as a topside.

The battlers against smut claim that the publishers and booksellers are hypocritical. Hypocritical may not be the right word, but they are wildly inconsistent in a self-serving way. Every publisher exercises censorship, although he calls it editorial judgment. There are things that are thought to be beyond the pale, usually demarcated by taboos related to race, ethnicity, gender, and other sensitive categories. Among the publishers protesting the protest of the moral majoritarians, there are also distinct biases regarding religion and what are called traditional values. This is notably the case with textbook publishers. As one of Mr. Wildmon's allies puts it, "Our values represent 75 percent of Americans. But it's these values that are being censored from the schoolroom." No fair-minded person will dispute that. Even People for the American Way, an organization formed to war against the moral majoritarians, admitted as much in a study of textbooks a while back.

Obscenity will always be with us, or at least until the coming of the Messianic Age. And so will the argument about what is and what is not obscene. The ongoing dispute is not between censors and civil libertarians, but over what standards should prevail in defining public decency. The argument for no standards is an argument against the very idea of public decency. Press those who make that argument, however, and we discover that they do have definite notions of what is obscene, beginning with the people who protest obscenity.

When the dispute over obscenity comes to an end, it will mean either the death of democracy or the arrival of the Kingdom. While we hope for the latter, we are responsible for preventing the former. And that is why, all in all, we wish the American Family Association well, and urge those who are in the business of dirty books and magazines to chuck their pretension that the American Way of Life depends upon their unfettered pursuit of profits.

Opinion

Hank Gathers and Cultural Christianity

Gilbert Meilaender

When the Loyola Marymount basketball team, riding the crest of an emotional high after the death of star player Hank Gathers, was making its spirited run in the NCAA basketball tournament last spring, CBS did a short feature on Gathers before one of the team's games. At one point, Brent Musberger said something to the effect that for the players the memory of their "fallen hero" Gathers was "a beacon that breathes passion into their dreams." I remember thinking to myself that a line like that could get a man fired.

But I have now found myself contemplating the Gathers phenomenon and my own ambivalent reaction to it—and, more generally, the place of sports in my religious life. I use that term advisedly, and to reflect a certain worry. I have turned my fifteen-year-old daughter into as fanatic a basketball fan as I am. And I noted that she strenuously objected when I laughed at the notion that the memory of Gathers might be a beacon breathing passion into the dreams of Loyola Marymount players. She found it genuinely touching. Up to a point, so did I. (I rewound the tape to watch Bo Kimble shoot that first free throw left-handed.)

Hank Gathers died, as far as we can tell, because he cared deeply about something and wanted to do it with real excellence. He wanted to play basketball in a way that exercised his powers to the fullest. There are many worse ways to die—and, in saying that, I do not have in mind those who die in hospitals or nursing homes with feeding tubes in place. We can die without having cared deeply enough about anything to commit our powers to excellence—whether excellence as an athlete, as a scholar, as an owner of a small business, as a mother or father. That, at least, did not happen to Gathers. An acquaintance of mine, whose wife teaches Classics, tells me that she observes

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that the students best able to appreciate the *Iliad*—with its ethic of heroism, its appeal to glory and shame—are athletes. There are few places in life where such lessons can still be learned, and we need to protect them against the advocates of non-competitive games, who lack a certain fundamental seriousness.

Having granted that, I must still say that at some point the pathos in the Gathers story became bathos. It was not, after all, the death of Hector. And even the most serious of our loves must still be rightly ordered in relation to what is truly ultimate. If the emotions expressed by many in relation to Gathers' death seemed finally excessive, might the reason be that we have lost an ultimate frame of reference by which to give our love for sports its rightful penultimate place of honor?

I would not want to be misunderstood: I have for some years now drawn up my picks in the NCAA tourney and sent them to various friends around the country for no better reason than to stay in touch about something that is truly worthwhile. For quite a few years I managed boys baseball teams in the summer, and—though I have uttered some falsehoods over the years—I never once told a team that it didn't matter whether they won or lost. I simply don't believe in speaking blatant falsehoods to our impressionable youth. I bought the Bill James *Baseball Abstract* every year when it hit the bookstores, and now I even buy the inferior *Baseball Book* to which he's devoting his energies. Not long ago I sent off my treasured Wilson A2000 glove ("the glove that Nelson Fox and Luis Aparicio use," as it was advertised back when I spent my hard-earned money to buy it) to be repaired, even though my age might suggest that such repair is by now unnecessary. And, for all his flaws, I can't quite stop liking Bobby Knight. So I am clearly hooked.

But, having also read my Augustine, I try to be alert to those goods which, though genuine, will not bear the whole weight of the heart's longing. Among them are baseball and basketball. (I leave football to a different breed of fan; I leave soccer to those who think it interesting to see what human beings can do without using their hands; I leave Bart Giamatti's posthumously published essays about baseball to those who think them eloquent.) I have begun to worry, for example, about the degree to which the ever-expanding NCAA tournament dominates my six weeks of Lent. I used to be quite content to watch two games on a Saturday and check other scores the next day. Now I may have found myself watching four on a Saturday and more on Sunday afternoon. Shades of a love in danger of becoming inordinate. I could wake up one day to find the memory of Hank Gathers a beacon breathing passion into my dreams.

When I was a boy, many stores closed from noon till three on Good Friday, while people attended Good Friday services. Those days are gone. I understand. But is it good that I should have found myself tempted to switch on the radio at 1:30 P.M. last Good Friday to see how the Indians were doing in an early-season game? (You may well reply: "You should be able to predict how the Indians are doing!") Like any intelligent person raised in the great state of Indiana, I know what "Hoosier hysteria" is all about, and I know there's no better high school basketball. I therefore am intensely interested in seeing how Damon Bailey will do in the coming year when, after having led his high school team to the state championship (in a state that has not descended to the insipidity of "classes" for different size schools), he heads off to Indiana University and the tutelage (!) of Bob Knight. But is it good that I should have been tempted to watch the McDonald's high school all-star game on television the afternoon of Easter Sunday just to have a look at the boy wonder?

Christians are given to all sorts of talk about cultural Christianity and its dangers. I am, to be honest, not as worried as some of my Anabaptist friends. Nor would they be if they kept more firmly in mind important aspects of our culture, as I am trying to do here. But Christians are going to have to begin doing for themselves what the culture no longer does automatically. Everybody (well, everybody who's in the know) remembers that Sandy Koufax once declined to pitch on Yom Kippur. And Christians, too, lest they lose their zest for "first things" may need to contemplate such possibilities. We would not, after all, want to find ourselves with no shrine at which to worship other than the estimable one of Hank Gathers.

GILBERT MEILAENDER *is Professor of Religion at Oberlin College.*

Academic Integrity Betrayed

Gerard V. Bradley

Abortion does funny things to the mind. Not necessarily the procedure itself: expert opinion on *its* mental effects is, at least according to Dr. Koop, inconclusive. I am referring to abortion polemics, specifically to the political, judicial, academic, and popular debate over its legality. *It* has proven most corrosive of intellectual clarity and integrity.

Roe itself is one cause: it was an intellectual nightmare. Pro-choice constitutional scholar John Ely said it was not constitutional law at all and showed no evidence that it wanted to be. Determined legal scholars have nevertheless installed it as a linchpin

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of constitutional theory: If a theory of constitutional lawmaking does not yield the result in *Roe*, the theory is no good. Laurence Tribe is just the most notorious exhibitor of that tendency.

But it is not only judges and legal scholars whose work has exhibited the baneful effects of abortion politics. In the 1989 *Webster* case, 281 American historians submitted a brief supporting *Roe v. Wade*. The brief made two central claims: (1) abortion was not illegal at common law, and (2) the moral value attached to the fetus became a central issue in American culture and law only in the late twentieth century. Both claims are false. Key signatories knew, or had ample reason to know, that they were false. Worse, one of the principal signatories, himself a key authority cited in the brief, has in his scholarly work reached and published conclusions that contradict the brief's conclusions. Worst of all, when the contradiction was brought to his attention, this scholar actually *defended* the duplicity as a public service.

Misrepresentation is not the only flaw in the scholars' brief. On the supposed legality of abortion at common law it is not scholarly at all. Cleaving to a hospitable conclusion most tenuously supported, it ignores contrary, competent scholarly evidence. Coke, followed by Hawkins, Blackstone, East, Russell, and Hale have all stood by the contrary view that abortion was illegal at common law. Cyril Means, whose work Justice Harry Blackmun featured in *Roe*, argued against Coke's exposition of the law, but grossly overworked his evidence. In any event, Coke's opinion prevailed in the law.

A greater failing is apparent from the brief's own common law, the authorities it *does* cite. The failings here are inadequate argument, mishandling of evidence, and sloppy, if not purposely misleading, expression. For example, the brief states that as "the Court demonstrated in *Roe v. Wade*, abortion was not illegal at common law." This suggests that abortion was always lawful at common law and that it was lawful throughout pregnancy. James Mohr's *Abortion in America* is cited as authority. But in that work, Mohr, a professor at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, plainly acknowledges that abortions were illegal after a pregnancy was confirmed by perceived fetal movement.

The brief's misrepresentations do not stop there. "Through the nineteenth century," it goes on, "American common law decisions uniformly reaffirmed that women committed no offense in seeking abortions." This claim, marshaled to support the unqualified claim in the preceding sentence, falsely implies that a consensual abortion gave rise to no criminal liability at all. At a public address in January, 1990, which I attended, Mohr repeated this irrelevant half-truth. Again, he offered it to support liberalized abortion laws. He said that the American legal tradition has shown "tolerance" for the woman having an abortion. Now it is true that most jurisdictions did not prosecute women who sought abortions, and instead prosecuted the abortionists who performed them. Still, over a third of American states in the nineteenth century criminalized a woman's own involvement in addition to that of the abortionists. No matter. The essential point is that the evidence shows that "tolerance" for the woman in no way meant that abortion was legal, much less a constitutional right.

Now let us turn to the claim that concern for the life of the fetus became a motivation for opposition to abortion only in the late twentieth century. Abundant scholarly evidence, notably that published by John Keown of the University of Leicester, belies that account from British experience. I do not think that anyone really doubts that American legislators who forbade abortion by statute in the nineteenth century were any less concerned to protect the fetus than were their British counterparts. Professor Mohr argues that the self-interested motives of medical professionals drove the campaign for statutory prohibitions of abortion, but even he admits that a primary reason for their campaign was their belief that abortion was immoral. Indeed, he points out that they defended the value of human life from fertilization as a near absolute and were "fierce opponents" of any attack on it.

It is not merely that easily available evidence was not reported by the brief writers. As noted, the brief actually *contradicts* the scholarly conclusions of Professor Mohr, one of its own signatories. When reached by telephone, Mohr conceded that some of what the brief said and implied about the common law and the purpose of the nineteenth-century statutes was inconsistent with what he had maintained in his book. He added that where inconsistencies exist he stood by the book rather than the brief, and he confessed that he was uncomfortable with the way his work was cited for some of the brief's claims. But he went on to express the view that the brief was a "political document," the work of a "citizen" not a "scholar."

Mohr's differentiation of roles, itself unpersuasive, should not obscure—and does not justify—the misrepresentation in the brief of what he understands to be the historical truth concerning abortion. No one—lawyer, scholar, or citizen—is privileged to behave that way in judicial proceedings. To take a cognate situation, were Mohr called as an expert witness (i.e., to testify orally) at a trial of precisely the issues raised in *Webster*, he would with such behavior be liable to indictment for perjury. Granted, he was not sworn to tell the truth before signing the brief, but anyone who says (as Mohr effectively does) that because of a desire to help one party win the suit telling the truth was no longer obligatory, could not in good conscience take the oath. In any event, no court would let him testify. He would not be permitted to give evidence precisely because his "evidence," due to bias, is worthless.

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Mohr defended his action both during our conversation and in his recent speech by stressing the different obligations to truth-telling of the "scholar" and the "citizen." He supported the distinction partly by remarking (without giving evidence) that a Reagan administration brief in the *Webster* case had misused his work. He apparently concluded that the one distortion justified the other. The option of not multiplying the abuses, of simply stating the truth, appears not to have occurred to him.

In any case, Mohr's distinction does not even describe the behavior it purports to justify. Mohr was *not* acting as a simple "citizen" in *Webster*. The brief's scholarly credentials were proclaimed as its unique contribution to the debate: "Never before have so many professional historians sought to address this Honorable Court in this way." A document whose professed purpose is to address and validate *historical* analyses cannot take refuge in being a "political" document. It represented matters of historical fact and put the full weight of its signatories' professional reputations behind those representations. If the brief was never intended as anything more than historical half-truths and artful rhetoric laced with the aroma of antiquity, submitting it as anything more than the advocacy of 281 pro-choice individuals who happen all to belong to the same profession amounted to purposeful deceit.

Mohr is perhaps this country's foremost expert on the history of abortion law. His willingness to sign the brief (highlighted in the brief itself) undoubtedly persuaded many other signatories of its integrity. But I very much doubt that Mohr alone among the signatories knew that crucial claims in the brief were dubious. Some others who signed are also experts. They, too, evidently cared more to preserve the legal right of women to elect abortion than for the truth about the history of abortion law. Mohr seemed persuaded at his recent speech that the truth was already a casualty of abortion polemics, that lawmaking on the subject was already intellectually bankrupt. Perhaps so, but from that observation nothing follows. Would Mohr agree that given his offense, I would be justified in lying—here, in this article—about the historians' brief?

Nor can the historians' conduct be explained away as rooted in prevalent deconstructionist redefinitions of the purpose of thought. Even one who proposes not to discover truth but to break down intellectual structures of domination would agree that, regardless of ideological purpose, one cannot simultaneously maintain the validity of contradictory propositions. No, it is easy to see from Mohr's explanation of his actions what is going on here. When it comes to politics, some scholars perceive a truncated obligation to the truth, if they perceive any obligation at all. At least Mohr maintains in his scholarly work the traditional devotion to objective inquiry. I fear that in large segments of the academy even that barricade has been breached.

GERARD V. BRADLEY *teaches in the College of Law at the University of Illinois, Champaign.*

Religious Freedom Denied

Richard F. Duncan

Imagine a country in which religious freedom is trammeled, and another country in which religious freedom is flourishing. Imagine a multitude of religious refugees fleeing the former nation and flocking to the latter. Until quite recently, most Americans would probably have been inclined in such a scenario to cast some East Bloc country (say East Germany) in the role of persecutor and the United States as the beacon of religious freedom. But in the wake of developments in Eastern Europe and the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in the Oregon peyote case, an argument could be made that the roles in our little melodrama should be reversed.

The peyote case, *Employment Division v. Smith*, is much more than a simple example of the state's power to regulate controlled substances. In the opinion of many constitutional experts, a majority of five Justices of the Supreme Court used the case as a vehicle to reason the Free Exercise Clause out of the Constitution. Indeed, one leading expert on constitutional law, Michael P. Farris of the Home School Legal Defense Association, has stated that the *Smith* case "has done to religious freedom what *Roe v. Wade* did to human life."

Religious people need to understand this case and its far-reaching implications. We also must recognize that our right to engage in our religious practices is inextricably intertwined with the rights of others to freely exercise their religion.

The facts of *Smith* are simple. Two American Indians, Alfred Smith and Galen Black, were denied unemployment benefits after being fired from their jobs as drug counselors. The benefits were denied because Smith and Black had been discharged for work-related "misconduct"—their use of the hallucinogenic drug peyote for sacramental purposes at a ceremony of the Native American Church. Smith and Black claimed that the denial of benefits was an unconstitutional burden on their free exercise of religion, because it penalized them for taking part in what to them was a religious sacrament. Not surprisingly, the Supreme Court disagreed and upheld Oregon's right

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to deny unemployment benefits to Smith and Black.

So where is the grave threat to religious freedom? Most persons would agree that individuals employed as drug counselors should abstain from the use of hallucinogenic drugs and that Oregon acted properly when it denied unemployment benefits to persons discharged for unlawful drug use. The problem is not with the specific holding of the case; rather, it is with the Supreme Court's reasoning.

Justice Antonin Scalia, writing for a five-judge majority, stated that the Free Exercise Clause does not apply to "generally applicable prohibitions of socially harmful conduct." In other words, so long as religious people are not singled out for discriminatory treatment, the government is free to enact laws that restrict or even criminalize religious practices. As Justice Sandra Day O'Connor pointed out in her separate opinion, the Court's reasoning in *Smith* casts aside "well-settled" case law protecting the free exercise of religion and is "incompatible with our Nation's fundamental commitment to individual religious liberty."

If *Smith* means what it says, religious liberty taken for granted today may be gone tomorrow. Justice Scalia made clear that government may prohibit that which religion requires, or require that which religion prohibits. Accommodation of religious conscience is left to the wisdom (or the whim) of the majority. The First Amendment no longer stands between Caesar and the sanctuary.

For example, many states have criminal laws that prohibit the serving of wine to minors. It has always been assumed that, under the Free Exercise Clause, these laws did not prohibit churches from providing sacramental wine to minors participating in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This assumption is no longer justified. Under the *Smith* decision, churches are not protected by the Free Exercise Clause against these laws, because the laws are of "general application" and are aimed at restricting "socially harmful conduct." In *Smith*, the socially harmful conduct was the use of peyote; in our example, it is the use of wine. Under the Supreme Court's reasoning, the cases are analogous and neither implicates Free Exercise concerns.

Other potential intrusions on religious life include anti-discrimination laws being applied to determine church membership, or to force churches to hire women as clergy or homosexuals as nursery workers. According to the logic of the Court, the Free Exercise Clause does not protect churches in these circumstances, unless some other constitutional right, such as Free Speech or the right of parents to control the upbringing of their children, is violated by the governmental intrusion.

I want to emphasize that this "parade of horribles" probably will not happen. Politically, the American people must not let it happen. But it is a very sad day in American legal history when the Constitution no longer guarantees that it cannot happen.

As Chuck Colson said in his recent book *Against the Night*, "It is difficult to think of fresh beginnings in times that seem so much like the end." But begin again we must, because we owe it to our children—and to our brothers and sisters throughout the world still engaged in the struggle for religious freedom.

RICHARD F. DUNCAN *is Professor of Law at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.*

Jews, Christians, and the Land of Israel

Robert L. Wilken

For many Jews and some Christians the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is seen as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. In particular, they have reference to the oracles in the exilic and post-exilic prophets about the return of the exiles from Babylonia and the reconstitution of the people in Jerusalem and Judaea.

Among the sixth-century prophets none spoke more tenderly of the return than Ezekiel: "But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they will soon come home. For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown; and I will multiply people upon you, the whole house of Israel, all of it; the cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt; and I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and be fruitful and I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the Lord. . . . And I will not let you hear any more the reproach of the nations, and you shall no longer bear the disgrace of the peoples and no longer cause your nation to stumble, says the Lord God." (Ezek. 36:8-15)

The seeming correspondence between events in our own day and the language of the prophets has prompted Christians to look with fresh eyes on the biblical promises about the Land and the prophetic oracles about return and restoration. And as Michael Wyschogrod observed recently in these pages ("The Bishops and the Middle East," April), Christian opinion is divided. Some Christians find "too little

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difficulty validating the Jewish right to the land of Israel on the basis of biblical promises" and others "err in the other direction." Wyschogrod has no quarrel, it seems, with those Christians who interpret the return to the Land as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, but he is impatient with those who resist such an interpretation. The difficulty, as he sees it, is that Christians "persist in spiritualizing the promises of the land" and hence cling to "an ancient strategy not easy to defend in the new theological climate of Jewish-Christian dialogue."

As appealing as this argument may appear, it founders on the fundamental principle of Christian Messianism. It is one thing for Christians to understand and appreciate *Jewish* convictions about the Messianic Age, and hence of the restoration of the Land of Israel, and therefore to acknowledge that one strand of biblical religion did not "spiritualize" the biblical promises. But it is quite another to expect Christians to abandon a spiritual (as distinct from political) interpretation of the land promises. For if the words of the prophets are not given a "spiritual" sense, there is no biblical and theological basis for the confession that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.

Origen of Alexandria and other early Christian thinkers realized centuries ago that the promises of return are part of the hope in a future Messianic age. For Christians this age has already begun. "In many and various ways God spoke of old . . . by the prophets; but in *these last days* he has spoken to us by a Son. . . ." (Heb. 1:1) If Jesus is confessed as the Christ, the biblical promises of restoration and return to the land *require* a spiritual (or eschatological) interpretation.

To be sure, some of the signs of this new age are not yet visible, e.g., "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together." (Isa. 11:6) Nevertheless, Jesus' contemporaries beheld the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the lame walking, sins being forgiven, and they witnessed the resurrection of Christ, the first fruits of the resurrection of all humankind. Isaiah 11, it should be noted, is read by Christians in Advent, the liturgical season that leads up to Christmas. Its opening words are: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." The birth, death, and resurrection of Christ inaugurate the Messianic age.

In disputes with Jews, Christian thinkers in the early centuries argued that the promises of return and restoration (in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets) must be interpreted to refer either to the time of the exile in the sixth century B.C.E., i.e., the time of the return from exile in Babylonia, *or* to the new gathering of humankind in the church. In the fifth century, St. Jerome, who was living in Palestine, carried on a running debate with Jews in his biblical commentaries on the interpretation of the prophecies of return and restoration. Jews took them to refer to a future rebuilding of the cities of Judaea as Jewish cities and to the reestablishment of Jewish rule in Jerusalem, while Jerome saw them as fulfilled in the coming of Christ and the new reality of the church.

All of which is to say that Christians have been thinking about these matters for some time, and there are sound reasons for their insisting on a "spiritual" interpretation. On exegetical and theological grounds, it is difficult for Christians to interpret the return to the land in our day as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, i.e., to give the return a "political" interpretation, without abandoning the confession that in Jesus of Nazareth the Messianic age has commenced. It is tempting to make things otherwise, but the theological consequences of abandoning this conviction are profound and far-reaching, touching even on a matter as fundamental as the doctrine of the Trinity.

For Jews, identification with the Land of Israel is rooted in the original promise to Abraham set forth in the Torah. "The Lord said to Abram: 'Lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see I will give to you and your descendants forever.'" (Gen. 13:14) Two thousand years have passed since the beginning of Christianity, and during that period Christians have learned some things about the Jews. Not only have the Jews survived as a people, but many are still observant, that is, they remain faithful to the covenant, as expressed in Deuteronomy: "And now, O Israel, give heed to the statutes and the ordinances which I teach you, and do them; that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you." (Deut. 4:1) Long after personal and familial ties to the land have been severed, Jews have not surrendered the conviction that the promise of the Land is an integral part of the covenant.

All this leaves things in an unsettled and unsatisfactory state. For Christians, the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel is an event without parallel. There are no precedents by which to discern its meaning, hence the readiness of some Christians to apply the ancient words of the prophets to events in our time. Because the return has brought about the reconstitution of the Jewish people as a political community within the territory promised to the "descendants of Abraham," the events of our time invite interpretation within the framework of biblical history. That is, what appears to some solely as a new chapter in Jewish history (and the history of the Middle East), makes a claim on the Christian construal of history. The Jews, so to speak, have returned to "history" and Christians can hardly be indifferent to the theological overtones of these developments. But how these extraordinary events are to be woven into the fabric of the biblical promises is yet to be seen.

For believing Jews and Christians alike, the ongoing

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process of interpretation will require both theological toughmindedness and a refusal to leave the matter fixed at a point of mutual incomprehension.

ROBERT L. WILKEN *is the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Virginia and the author of* John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century.

INSTAURATIONS: THE NEW SCIENCE OF SUNSETS

It is harder to see what one sees
than anyone knows
because it is easier, far far easier
than one can suppose.
That still point of the turning world
—look! this light through the petal—
where there are no shadows
and where it is never a problem never to have shadows,
neither haunted by undaunted need
nor pursued by misconstrued fleeting:
there where Plato dwelt
and many have followed rejoicing
is where we see.
That radiance more durable than fire,
more daring than rock,
that durable and that daring more enduring than dark.
The spark which, incapable of being pinned down by the naked eye,
pins one finally inexorably to reality, the great unpinning:
one achieves a dancing discipline,
is fulfilled by a flying fatal freedom,
achievement and fulfillment being gift and more than gift.
The dazzle which uncrazes the poet with its amazing unveiling.
One there is Who was there before either Plato or poet,
but all, all are invited
by the changeless One Who loves changing
the One into Many and the Many into One.
There where the daze is unnumbered,
where the wound blazes and, blazing, brings most humble joy.
Gold vermilion gash which—melting, flowing, pulsing—
is yet always perfectly defining, accurately designing,
and, enlightening one's mind, enflaming one's heart,
catches the eye and snatches the ear:
one hears the glowing
—O heart of matter Thou art matter of the heart—
and the blind mind, captured in a rapture, sees the singing:
Behold here iridescence where the sun never sets.

Paul Edward Guay

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Worldly Wisdom, Christian Foolishness

Peter L. Berger

Intellectuals who are also Christians face the continuing problem of the tangled relationship between their vocation and their faith. As intellectuals, they necessarily immerse themselves in the wisdom of this world; as Christians, they understand that wisdom to be in considerable tension with what St. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians (1:18-22), called the folly of the Gospel.

> For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written [the reference is to Isaiah 29], "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart."
>
> Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.
>
> For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Very often passages of the Bible seem remote: they come to us from distant times and places that are difficult for us to imagine, let alone to identify with. I think this difficulty is less frequently encountered in the Pauline Epistles. The late Hellenistic world out of which they come and to which they are addressed has a rather modern feel. This was a world of sophisticated cities—affluent, cosmopolitan, pluralistic, and more than a little libertine. I suspect that the people of the city of Boston, the place where I live and work, would find Paul's Corinth quite familiar: a port city, a regional capital, bustling with commerce, with an ethnically heterogeneous population of diverse religious affiliations, endowed (among other things) with a flourishing sex industry.

To be sure, the Christian community to whom Paul wrote was not exactly the upper class of this metropolis; in all likelihood, its members were mostly what we would today call lower middle class. (Corinthian Christians read the *Herald*, not the *Globe*.) But, we may assume, they too must have participated in a sense of being part of an important, worldly-wise center. They too, at least vicariously, partook of the "wisdom of the world." In that perspective, the Apostle must have appeared as a very odd fellow indeed, and his message as even odder. What he writes to the Corinthians makes it very clear that he was fully conscious of these appearances.

The historian Michael Grant, in the opening lines of his biography of Paul, calls him "one of the most perpetually significant men who have ever lived." This statement can be persuasively defended, not on the basis of some theological presupposition, but as a sober historical assessment. Speaking humanly, it was Paul who transformed an obscure Jewish sect into a universal faith that decisively changed the course of history. It is clear from the sources that he must have been an extraordinary individual—a man of great

PETER L. BERGER *is Director of the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture at Boston University and a member of the Editorial Board of* FIRST THINGS.

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learning and intellectual brilliance, an inspired speaker, with an overpowering personality and awesome courage.

Despite these qualities, which were certainly known to the Corinthian Christians, I doubt very much whether Paul impressed sophisticated people (or, for that matter, people with aspirations toward sophistication) as an appealing figure. He probably embarrassed them. Here was a man obsessed with his mission, unbending and endlessly aggressive in his religious views, absolutist and authoritarian in his dealings with others, and, in addition to all that, afflicted with a malady the details of which we don't know but which, we may imagine, did not add to his social acceptability. We may reconstruct the adjectives and phrases used to describe him both at the cocktail parties of the Corinthian elite (if the latter was aware of him at all) and in the pubs where his petit-bourgeois clientele would gather: "fundamentalist," "simplistic," "compulsive-neurotic," "asking too much of sensible people," "never listening to the other side of an argument," "perhaps a little crazy"—in sum, something of a disagreeable fanatic.

It is also clear, however, that the main reason for embarrassment was not the man but his message. It was that message, the "word of the cross" preached by Paul, that struck both Jews and Gentiles as scandalous foolishness, as an offense against both the wisdom of the educated and the common sense of ordinary people. Now, both the wisdom and the common sense of Paul's time are not our own (despite the affinities we may feel for the Hellenistic world), and therefore we can be rather relaxed about these ancient discrepancies. To appreciate the outlandishness of Paul's message, we should perhaps "translate" these discrepancies into contemporary terms of our own. It is as if someone were to take whatever we regard as scientifically established knowledge or commonsense wisdom and confidently and aggressively proclaim the opposite. Paul's message must have been received by Corinth much as we receive the message of those who proclaim a flat earth.

Paul's "word of the cross," of course, is the core of the Gospel: that God came into the world in the improbable figure of a small-town carpenter turned into itinerant preacher, who was executed as a criminal, despised and abandoned, who was dead and buried—and who then, in a moment that transformed the whole structure of reality, rose from the dead to become the mightiest power in the universe and the lord of all human destinies. People, then as now, are relatively prepared to accept savior figures promising redemption from the ills of human existence. It is the "cross" part of the message that constitutes the "stumbling-block," the "folly." It is that crucial motif in Christianity that theologians have called the *kenosis*, the humiliation of God: The same God who has all power, who created this world and all possible worlds, has taken upon himself the form and the fate of an ordinary man, and indeed a man who suffered the most agonizing afflictions of betrayal, torture, despair, and death. No one, Jew or Gentile, would have been taken aback at a statement that the power of God is greater than men; Paul's scandalous proposition is that the *weakness* of God reveals His true power, including the power to triumph over sin and death.

The Jews of Paul's time were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, a miraculous savior who would end the sufferings of God's people and institute a reign of perfect justice. The "stumbling-block" to them was the truly outrageous proposition that the Messianic expectations of Israelite tradition were fulfilled by this Jesus of Nazareth, of whom they had either never heard or who, as far as they were concerned, had died an obscure death over ten years previously. The Gentiles, or at least many of them, were accustomed to savior cults. Corinth, it seems, was not an overly religious place (commercial centers rarely are). Hans Conzelmann, a New Testament scholar, describes it as the "absolutely normal picture of a Roman Hellenistic city," but he does mention sanctuaries to Isis and Serapis, familiar divinities of the ancient world; we can be quite sure that other denominations had their local branches. They all worshipped very powerful beings—that, after all, is what gods and goddesses are—and the more recently imported cults were very much concerned to offer salvation, including the promise of eternal life, to their adherents. The "folly" to the Gentiles was, once again, the kenotic core of Paul's message—the utter degradation of the savior as the necessary precondition of his triumph. To be sure, there were other offensive aspects to the Christianity that Paul preached, but it seems probable that this was the most offensive.

The Christian community in Corinth probably had in it people of both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, and even after their conversion, they must have been troubled by the discrepancies between the faith they affirmed and the taken-for-granted assumptions of their culture. They must have suffered very much from what modern psychologists call "cognitive dissonance"—the painful disagreement between what we believe and what others maintain with assurance. Assuming that human nature has not changed from that time till this, we may suppose that the Corinthian Christians did exactly what people in this predicament do today—namely, try to *reduce* the dissonance. This would entail finding some way to reduce the discrepancies between the Gospel and the culture, to somehow accommodate the Gospel to the "wisdom of the world" and thus to make it less "foolish."

It is clear from Paul's letter that there were a number of heresies of which he disapproved in the Corinthian community. New Testament scholars, I understand, disagree on just what these heresies were; apparently

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there is a weight of opinion favoring the belief that they involved doctrines related to what later came to be known as Gnosticism, an ingenious synthesis between Christianity and various Asian redemption cults that went a long way toward de-emphasizing the kenotic dimension of the Gospel. Be that as it may, it is reasonable to surmise that the Corinthian heresies sought to reduce the offensive starkness of the Christian message, to make it less of a "folly," more in line with conventional assumptions and values. In other words, what Paul was faced with was an early form of *aggiornamento*, to use a modern Roman Catholic term which means, literally, to bring Christianity up to date. Protestants use other terminology to recommend such accommodations to the spirit of the times—they speak of making Christianity "more relevant," or of getting the Church "on the right side of history."

Paul invites various accredited experts to come forward: "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?" Here we reach a point of comparison where today's Boston clearly outstrips first-century Corinth. Boston, after all, is known as the Athens of America, not the Corinth of America: This city, with good reason, has been called the academic capital of the nation—and, given the massive accumulation of institutions of higher learning here, it may well be called the academic capital of the world. We are home to accredited experts of every conceivable type. We have no shortage of individuals quite certain as to their wisdom. If scribes are people whose wisdom has been certified by credentials of one sort of another (the Greek word that Paul uses literally means "grammarians"), then we have more than enough of those; that, indeed, is the category to which I belong, my particular "grammar" being that of the modern social sciences. We have as well in our lawyers and public controversialists an abundance of the "debaters of the age." All in all, contemporary Boston is as central a depository of the wisdom of the age as one could imagine.

In a passage just prior to that with which I began this essay, Paul deplores the presence of quarreling parties within the Corinthian community, parties apparently divided by this or that interpretation of the faith. He names one group claiming allegiance to himself, Paul, another to one Apollos, another to Cephas, and one (with all due modesty) asserting simply that they "belong to Christ." One is reminded here of a number of modern American denominations, most of them distressingly limited in membership, that reserve for themselves the name "Christian." But even this apart, we have no difficulty empathizing with the Corinthians' doctrinal divisions. There is, among us, of course, the well-known Professor Apollos at MIT; there is the celebrity intellectual Cephas who publishes in all the right magazines and is seen weekly on PBS; there are Apollonians, neo-Apollonians, and post-Apollonians, all quarreling vigorously and all provided with impressive financial support by various foundations committed to one side or another of our doctrinal disputes. Each party, of course, claims to possess privileged access to the *Zeitgeist* and to be the most authoritative or perhaps the only mouthpiece for the "wisdom of the world." Most important, there are regiments of Christian teachers, clergy, and lay people working full-time to update the faith in terms of the latest Apollonian or Cephalian wisdom.

Allow me to put this in sociological terms (sociology provides a limited but useful "grammar" here): Every human society has its own corpus of officially accredited wisdom, the beliefs and values that most people take for granted as self-evidently true. Every human society has institutions and functionaries whose task it is to represent this putative truth, to transmit it to each new generation, to engage in rituals that reaffirm it, and sometimes to deal (at least in words) with those who are benighted or wicked enough to deny it. In most societies in history, this has been a relatively easy matter, because there was only one set of beliefs and values, a unified and coherent worldview that everybody knew and that almost everybody (except for a cranky Socrates now and then) took for granted.

Modern societies share with the Hellenistic world the complicating factor of pluralism: there are competing beliefs and values, there is more than one worldview. In this situation, the ongoing effort by Christians to accommodate to the "wisdom of the world" becomes a difficult, frantic, even somewhat ridiculous affair. Each time that one has, after enormous effort, managed to adjust the faith to the prevailing culture, that culture ups and changes. I think it was W. R. Inge, the Anglican theologian, who put it thus: "He who would marry the spirit of the age soon finds himself a widower." Recent Christian theology is well-populated with bewildered and understandably resentful widowers!

Still, there are some beliefs and values that are quite generally shared and that persist for at least a while (say, a few lifetimes), even in a situation marked by pluralism and greatly accelerated cultural change. Modern science has provided some basic cognitive assumptions of this type, and modern technology has ensured that they are internalized by people (the majority of people) who know very little about science. Other beliefs and values are much more unevenly distributed—by class, education, ethnicity, and other factors. This is particularly so with moral and political values, which are much harder to establish by scientific methods and which therefore are much more dependent on social support. Thus a contemporary individual can afford to be more relaxed about the proposition that the earth is indeed a globe or that an appendicitis can be cured by surgery than about the moral position that abortion is or is not homicide, or the political position that the Reagan presidency was or was not a great breakthrough for American

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democracy. It follows that some views will be perceived as "folly" virtually everywhere in society, while others will be the accepted wisdom in one social milieu and utter foolishness in another. The latter case can easily be experienced by anyone who, like myself, frequently commutes between academic and corporate America; another but comparably sharp culture shock can be undergone if one moves between, say, the Harvard Faculty Club and a working-class tavern in South Boston.

The pluralistic character of our culture forces those who would "update" Christianity into a state of permanent nervousness. The "wisdom of the world," which is the standard by which they would modify the religious tradition, varies from one social location to another; what is worse, it keeps changing, often rapidly so, even in the same locale. Each new theology should have attached to it as it comes along a label that gives its proper place of application ("Use only with people who have had four years of college") and a terminal date for its applicability anywhere ("Stop using five years from date of issue"). Perhaps, for some individuals who have been chasing the *Zeitgeist* in this manner for a while, "folly" begins to seem like not such an unattractive option!

Of all the sociological indicators as to what people believe and take for granted, the most reliable is class. Put an individual behind a screen (so that I cannot even know his or her age, sex, or race) and tell me nothing about that individual's background except occupation and income (which, of course, are the major determinants of class), and I will be able to come up with an impressively large number of plausible predictions about this individual's beliefs (including religious and moral ones), political attitudes (including voting behavior), and lifestyle (including such allegedly private matters as sexual practices).

Now, please note: When I say "predictions," I am implying a statistical relationship between class and these various cognitive, normative, and behavioral characteristics. In other words, I would be making a probability statement, a statement about the frequency distribution of these characteristics among different groups. There are always exceptions. Thus, for example, if you tell me that the individual behind the screen is a middle-income English professor, I will predict that he or she is likely to be unchurched, is politically liberal, votes Democratic, drives a fuel-efficient imported car, and is pro-choice. This prediction may well turn out to be false in a particular case: Remove the screen, and what comes out may be a fierce Evangelical who is a fervently conservative supporter of the Republican party and who drives a used Cadillac from one pro-life rally to another. As a sociologist, I cannot say that such a figure is impossible; I *can* say that it is *unlikely*. Conversely, if the individual behind the screen turns out to be a middle-income stock broker, I would *not* expect him or her to be averse to church-going, a liberal Democrat, an environmentally oriented consumer, or much of a pro-choicer. And once again, a different set of probabilities would apply to an individual whose occupation and income place him or her in the working class. (Let me point out here that my use just now of what may seem like feminist usage—"he/she, his/her"—is not that at all; I am not given to feminist English. Rather, I want to stress that class, not gender, is the determining factor in these matters.)

The result of these considerations is quite simple: *The "wisdom of the world" always has a sociological address.* In consequence, every accommodation to it on the part of Christians will be "relevant" in one very specific social setting (usually determined by class) and, conversely, will be "irrelevant" in another setting. A good example of this is the feminist use of language that I just referred to. It calls itself "inclusive language." Sociologically speaking, it is precisely the opposite: It serves as a linguistic boundary-marker. Those who employ this language announce their inclusion in a particular ideological community; those who do not employ it are ipso facto *excluded* from that community. What is more, that community is class-specific to a very high degree, at least at this juncture in cultural history. Put up that screen again and from behind it let me hear a voice, female *or* male, awkwardly stumbling through a few sentences with this "her/his," "humankind," "repairperson" business, and I can make a strong prediction as to the class of the individual speaking.

Christians, then, who set out to accommodate the faith to the modern world should always ask themselves which sector of that world they seek to address. Very probably, whatever *aggiornamento* they come up with, it will include some, exclude others. And if the *aggiornamento* is undertaken with the cultural elite in mind, then it is important to understand that the beliefs of this particular group are the most fickle of all. These are people professionally trained to deal with symbolic knowledge; they turn out such symbols (beliefs, values, opinions) with great ease, and they turn them back in again. A project of religious accommodation to today's cultural elite, therefore, could be compared to doing an instrumental accompaniment for a singer who begins with one song, changes to a second song in mid-performance, and ends up with a poetry recital.

Now, let me draw back just a little from the class relativism I have just enunciated: There are *some* cognitive and normative assumptions that are found, even today, pretty much throughout the society. (If this were not so, the society could not hold together at all.) By their very nature, these are *not* beliefs and values that are politically "relevant": Political battles are about ideas and propositions that people do *not* have in common. As already mentioned, many of these

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society-wide assumptions derive from modern science and (more important, I think) from the everyday applications of science by way of technology. To that extent, there is some validity to the widespread notion that there is such a thing as a "modern worldview," and perhaps even such a creature as "modern man."

The question that Christians (or other religious people) should ask themselves here is philosophical rather than sociological: Granting (as I think we must) that modern science has given us new and often penetrating insights into reality and that modern technology has enormously increased our control over our lives, is it not possible that in the process some very precious things have been lost? I am not thinking here of the unfortunate by-products of our technologized world that we hear so much about today: that we may all live to be a hundred, only to swelter under the greenhouse effect or to be kept going attached to life-support machines. I am thinking of *truths* that may have been lost in the process of modernization. Our ancestors didn't know about particle physics, but they spoke with angels. Let it be stipulated that we have gained through the knowledge of particle physics—I mean, that we have gained a new measure of *truth*. But could it be that we *lost* a truth when our conversation with angels came to a stop? Are we, *can* we be, so sure that the truths of modern physics necessarily imply the untruth of angels? I am not sure at all; indeed, I am strongly inclined to believe the opposite. In that case, the Christian churches (and other religious institutions) would be paying a very high price for the "updating" of their tradition—the price being some precious truths that they were the last to hold onto.

When Paul spoke of the "folly" of the Gospel and counter-posed it to the "wisdom of the world," he was pointing to what we might call a cognitive aspect of God's *kenosis*, of God's abasement. In Christian preaching, and quite properly so, we more often hear of its *moral* aspect: Jesus came especially to the poor and the despised, to the margins of society, and he died as a criminal; and today, too, we are more likely to find him visible on comparable margins than among the rich, the powerful, and the respected. This is the morally revolutionary content of the "word of the cross," and, it seems to me, this shocking message has never been fully absorbed in all the centuries of Christian history. It continues to shake the foundations of all moral systems invented by men, it relativizes all social hierarchies, and, in the final analysis, it shows up the hollowness of all humanly constructed orders. But the "wisdom of the world" is part and parcel of every such order; the "folly" of the Gospel is precisely that it relativizes, puts into question, everything that passes for "wisdom" and everyone who claims to possess it.

Protestant theologians have described God's work of salvation as an *opus alienum*, an "alien work." By this term, they meant to emphasize that our salvation is not in our own hands, that it is altogether God's doing. This emphasis, of course, was at the core of the Protestant Reformation, in its emphasis on the primacy of grace and its rejection of "salvation by works" (that is, *human* works). This aspect of Christian faith does not concern me at the moment. (For the record, let me say that I tend to think that the Reformers had a very important point to make here, but that, perhaps inevitably, they exaggerated it.) Rather, I want to emphasize the *alienness* of the Christian message as a whole: This savior, whom the Gospel proclaims, is an intruder, one who breaks into human reality like a "thief in the night"—unexpected, unrecognized, indeed unappealing. In this, the savior actually authenticates his divine provenance: The divine (and not only in Christianity) always manifests itself as that which is alien, *not* human, *not* part of ordinary reality. Rudolf Otto, the great historian of religion, spoke of the quality of *totaliter aliter*, the "totally other," which, he claimed, is of the essence of religious experience. The same quality is intended by the term "transcendent"—the divine, wherever it manifests itself, transcends (literally, "goes beyond") anything that human beings are familiar with. In this aspect of alienness, Christianity does not fundamentally differ from other religious traditions—after all, Christianity *is* one religion among others, so this should neither surprise nor trouble Christians. But the kenotic dimension of the Christian message adds an alien quality distinctively its own. This, precisely, is the "folly" that Paul spoke of.

If the Church gives up this "folly," it gives up itself and its very reason for being. This is why the pursuit of the "wisdom of the world" is finally so pernicious. It is not just that it is more or less futile (for the sociological reasons I have mentioned) or that it is philosophically dubious. More importantly, if the Church (or, for that matter, individual Christians) gives up the transcendent core of the tradition in order to placate this or that alleged spirit of the times, what is given up is the most precious truth that has been entrusted to the Church's care—the truth about the redemption of men through God's coming into the world in Christ.

To be sure, this message must always be delivered differently to different audiences. It must be *translated*. Just as it would make no sense to preach to an American congregation in Greek, it would be counterproductive to force on American Christians all the cognitive and normative assumptions of the Hellenistic world that even Paul took for granted. But, as every good translator knows, translation must not distort (or, more modestly, distort as little as possible) the text being translated. It is one thing, say, to translate Homer into English in such a way that modern Americans can try to understand him; it is quite another thing to translate him in such a way that he appears to be a spokesman for this or that modern

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American ideology—as an advocate, say, of democracy, or capitalism, or whatever. Such care in translation is a matter of simple intellectual honesty. It is that *also* when it comes to the texts of the Christian tradition, but in that case there is more involved. I suppose that there may be some professor of classics somewhere who looks upon the *Iliad* as containing knowledge necessary for our salvation, but there cannot be many such people. But the Church has claimed salvific import for its sacred texts. For this reason, more than intellectual dishonesty is involved when these texts are "translated" in such a way that their transcendent contents are turned into propaganda for this or that modern agenda.

We do not know just what were the parties that divided the Christian community in Corinth, those followers of Apollos or Cephas. It would be interesting to know, and perhaps some discoveries will be made that will allow future New Testament scholars to identify these competing ideological groupings. But it matters little as far as the main message of the Apostle is concerned, for what concerned him was not so much the specific doctrines at issue, but (or so I think) the fact that *any* doctrine, *any* putative representation of the "wisdom of the world," should take the place of the Gospel that is the "word of the cross." Similarly, an understanding and an assessment of the various doctrines and ideologies that divide us today is interesting; on a certain level, such as that of politics, it may even be important or morally urgent. But in the face of the Gospel, *sub specie aeternitatis* (and the Gospel points us toward eternity), these distinctions and judgments are quite unimportant, indeed irrelevant. Thus the Gospel is not to be identified with either the "American way of life" or any conceivable challenge to it, not with capitalism nor with socialism, not with "traditional family values" and not with any "liberation" from these values. In sum: The Gospel is not of this world, and to try and make it so is to lose it and to lose the redemptive power it contains.

In a recent conversation, a sociologist in Spain who has studied the great changes that have occurred in the Roman Catholic church since the Second Vatican Council said something that struck me as very insightful. Christians who consider themselves "progressives," he said, always tell us to "read the signs of the times"; has it never occurred to these people, he asked, that they might *write* some of these signs? At least in recent years, the stance of Christians (and by no means only Roman Catholics) in the face of the "wisdom" of the modern world has been largely passive, even supine—a "reading" rather than "writing" attitude. The Gospel was subjected to the judgment of this or that worldly standard; rarely did the reverse occur.

To be sure, there are all sorts of Christian orthodoxies and fundamentalisms around, and, in America at any rate, they have done very well. But they have *not* done well among those who are respected as thinkers and teachers of the Church. I am not for a moment suggesting that it would be better if they had. The very last thing I want to advocate is some sort of fundamentalism; I am not even advocating orthodoxy. I *am* suggesting that there is a middle ground between the "progressive" surrender to the age and the fundamentalist denial of it. The first only "reads," the latter only "writes." Or, to change the image, the one listens and has nothing to say, the other speaks without ever having listened. It seems to me that Christian wisdom must always encompass both attitudes.

There arise from these observations certain implications for those of us who are indeed "scribes," members of that class which makes its living from producing and distributing what passes today for officially certified "wisdom." Much of what I have said could be taken as a criticism of this class; to the extent that I belong to it, I could even be suspected of masochism or self-hatred. I would like to correct this impression. There is, to be sure, an element of "put-down" here: I intend to put down the arrogant delusion of intellectuals that they are superior human beings and the even more dangerous idea that, by virtue of their putatively superior qualities, they constitute a moral or even political elite. These misguided notions are thoroughly unchristian, but it seems to me that we do not need Christianity to instruct us on the foolishness of such pretensions—a realistic look at the world will do. Intellectuals do not have better moral judgment than people with little or no education, they do not live more wisely, they are certainly not more compassionate, they have not fewer but *different* superstitions, and they are capable of the most mindless fanaticisms. To say these things, however, is not for a moment to idealize or to romanticize people with little or no education. The ignorant, the poor, the underclass are not morally superior either (and it is not because of their superiority that Jesus preferred their company), they do not have deeper insights into life, their values and opinions have no privileged status. The "word of the cross" is radically egalitarian, *not* in a political sense, but in the infinitely more profound sense that before God all human pretensions are equally shown up to be as nothing.

At the end of the day, the "word of the cross" is addressed to all of us, whatever our class or our life situation. Jesus preferred to move on the margins of society, but he is able to appear in every social location. The "word of the cross" saves us because it tells us that we do not have to be strong in order to participate in God's power. God reveals himself in weakness—in physical and social weakness, in moral weakness, and also in intellectual weakness. He moves among the poor, among sinners, among "fools." Once we have had our various pretentions debunked, there is very great comfort in this message. In the ultimate, the most cosmic, sense of the word, we can *relax*!

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The word of the cross directs our attention toward God's weakness—his coming into the world in the weak form of a man, this man's persecution and degradation, his lonely despair and his painful death. In contemplating God's weakness and Jesus' Calvary, we inevitably include the weakness and the suffering of all creatures, all those, in the words of the Book of Common Prayer, "who are any ways afflicted, or distressed, in mind, body, or estate." But if that were all there is to Christianity, it would be the most doleful religion imaginable, a truly masochistic and pathological belief. Of course that is not the case at all. The journey to Calvary is the prelude, not the culmination. In the rhythm of the liturgical year, Lent leads to Easter, the ultimate weakness of God to the blinding revelation of his omnipotence. The "word of the cross" culminates and finds its true meaning in the word of the resurrection—Christ's resurrection and our own. It is this redemptive word that Paul carried with him on his restless travels and that he was anxious to protect against the false wisdoms of the world. The same redemptive word is the only reason for being of the Christian Church today, as it is the beginning and end of our faith. FT

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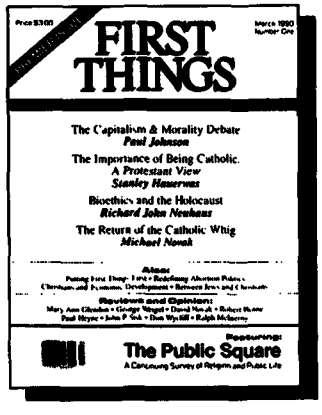

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Wealth and Whimsy: On Economic Creativity

Richard John Neuhaus

The question is: What are the theological resources of the Christian tradition for understanding the production of wealth? The answer is: Apparently there are none. *Apparently*. That is, were one to run through a hypothetical index of two millennia of Christian theology looking for entries under the category of "Wealth, production of," the findings would be pretty slim. Indeed, it is doubtful that we would find that category in our hypothetical index. Certainly it is not included in the standard dictionaries of Christian theology.

Irving Kristol was guilty of only slight hyperbole when he said of Michael Novak's 1982 book, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, "Incredible as it may seem, this is the first book to provide us with a critical appreciation of democratic capitalism from a theological point of view." True, in 1981 Robert Benne had published his *The Ethic of Democratic Capitalism*. The same year saw the appearance of George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty*, which argued in what might be described as a theological mode that capitalist productivity is based upon altruism and ultimate trust. Going back to the latter part of the nineteenth century, we find that there was a rash of Christian literature extolling what Andrew Carnegie called "the gospel of wealth." It would seem to be the case, however, that serious theological discussion of economics in relation to the production of wealth is a relatively recent development.

My purpose is to explain something of why this should be so. Another purpose is to suggest, the index makers notwithstanding, that the Christian tradition is rich in resources supportive of the production of wealth. However, for various and often complicated reasons, most Christian thinkers have not discussed those resources in connection with economics.

Something must be said about early Christian views toward the rich and riches, and about the earlier views to be found in Hebrew and Greek thought. The ancient Greek word for riches, found also in the New Testament and the Septuagint version of the Hebrew scriptures, is *ploutos* (from which the word *plutocrat* is derived). Suggestively, the root is the Indo-European *pel*, which means both "to flow" and "to fill." At least etymologically, the connotation is one of dynamic movement, perhaps even of growth. In the Greek usage of these periods, however, *ploutos* connoted something much more static. To be rich was to have it, rather than to be in the process of getting it—never mind producing it. *Ploutos* was a sign of a happy life lived within a stable order under the blessing of the gods.

In Homer, nobility and wealth went together. Some scholars say they were identical. The gain or loss of wealth, and hence of nobility, was in the hands of the gods, for misfortune and guilt could no more be separated than fortune and virtue. In Homer, an apparently nice thing about being rich was that one did not have to work. That changed with Hesiod, who taught that work is not shameful but honorable. He introduced an ethical condemnation of the arrogant rich who despoil the laboring peasant, and thus the link between wealth and worth was no longer secure.

If the moral order was not as self-evident to Hesiod as it was to Homer, during the period from the pre-Socratics to Aristotle the entire social order was also unstable and very much in question. There was a tension between the social order and culture, between the individual and society. Experience taught that there were poor people who were cultured and rich people who were uncultured. Riches became only one

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS *is Editor-in-Chief of* FIRST THINGS.

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way, and a very uncertain way, of seeking security against life's uncertainties. The idea of striving for wealth became prominent, but the good man might decline so to strive, seeking rather the true wealth of virtue and wisdom. In Plato and Aristotle we discover a functional view of wealth; it is a means to be used in the living of the virtuous life. Membership in the *polis* was determined less by wealth itself than by one's attitude toward wealth.

A suspicious attitude toward wealth, it becomes apparent, has deep classical roots. Aristotle thought moderate wealth better than great wealth, since it is easier to handle and less distracting from the important things in life. Plato went further, comparing material wealth most unfavorably with the true riches of wisdom, culture, and virtue. Some Cynics and Stoics radicalized this view by calling for the rejection of wealth altogether. *Paidea*, they taught, is possible only for the poor, since wealth and virtue are mutually exclusive. In contrast to Plato and Aristotle, their point of reference in thinking about material goods was no longer the *polis* but the individual. And of course they had quite reversed the earlier Greek view of the connection between wealth and nobility. Later Stoics, perhaps predictably, reestablished a more balanced view, acknowledging the advantages of being comfortably off over being penurious, while insisting that wealth was an *adiaphoron* that could be either good or bad depending on whether it was used to cultivate virtue and wisdom in harmony with the cosmic order. But the judgment was now well entrenched that riches are shadowed by a moral question mark.

That judgment is more ambivalent in the Hebrew scriptures, at least at the beginning. In Genesis 14 and 15, for example, the origin and increase of riches through the booty of war, dowries, and successful breeding are providentially guided. Wealth is the gift of God and a sign of his blessing (Deut. 28:1-14). Later, in the prophetic period, the moral question mark becomes much more prominent. This is undoubtedly related to a dramatic change in social circumstances. Jerusalem and Samaria were now royal cities, and the prophets were agreed on the moral scandal of there being a small stratum of plutocrats in a population generally marked by severe poverty. That is the depiction offered in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Micah. The prophetic outrage was exacerbated by particular violations of covenantal fidelity such as forced labor, the enslavement of fellow countrymen, and fraud by which widows and orphans were deprived of their rights. Isaiah in particular (5:14, 32-33) associates riches with pride and he prophesies that the pomp and glory of Jerusalem will go down to the underworld, its wealth will be scattered like chaff, the city will stand waste and empty, and the wives of the nobility will share the lot of the poor whom they had previously despised.

The still later Wisdom literature returns, in a somewhat commonsensical vein, to a more positive assessment of wealth, even suggesting that the getting (if not the producing) of wealth is assisted by a life of virtue. Drawing on practical experience, it is observed that a man becomes rich if he is economical (Prov. 24:4), industrious (Sirach 31:3), strong (Prov. 10:4), and refrains from wickedness. The benefits of wealth are security (Prov. 10:15), friends (Prov. 14:20), honor (Ecclus. 10:30), a full and happy life (Ecclus. 44:1-8), and the chance to give alms (Ecclus. 31:8; Tob. 12:8). Although tempered by this more appreciative view of riches, the prophetic critique is by no means lost. Especially prominent are warnings against the dangers of pride and of trusting in riches rather than in God. In Job and elsewhere, the question of theodicy is sharply raised—why the wicked should prosper while the righteous suffer want. During the intertestamental period this question develops in an eschatological direction, offering the hope of a Day of the Lord in which such injustices will be righted. It is this eschatological note that will dominate the New Testament understanding of riches.

In Matthew we encounter the young man who did not follow Jesus because he was attached to his great riches (19:22), which occasions the remark that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Here and elsewhere, however, it would seem that Jesus is referring not to a class but to Everyman. The great question is whether one is attached to the present passing order or to the new order that is to come and is, in Jesus, already proleptically present. Attachment to the present is marked by anxiety which, in the Sermon on the Mount, is the characteristic attitude of the pagan (6:25-32). In other words, the view of riches and every other attachment is not so much ethical as eschatological and theocentric. For instance, it is noted without comment that Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man, and in the lavish anointing at Bethany it appears that poverty has no particular religious significance: "For the poor you will have always with you, but you will not always have me" (26:11).

In Mark and Luke there is a considerable sharpening of the critique of riches. In Luke especially, the rich are depicted as the opponents of Jesus, and there is a striking accent on the eschatological great reversal: those invited first to the feast do not share in it (14:24), the hungry are filled with good things while the rich are sent empty away (1:53), and those who abase themselves will be exalted (14:11; 18:29-30). In the parable of the sower, "the cares and riches and pleasures of life" are the "thorns" that choke the word (8:14). Zacchaeus gives half his goods to the poor and restores fourfold what he had gained wrongfully, and this is held up as an example (19:8). Repeatedly, the disciples are assured that their surrender of riches now will result in gain many times over, both in this life

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and in the world to come. One can easily see how the gospel accounts amply supply the "liberation theologians" of our day with a rhetoric to be employed against riches and the rich. Whether their polemic is attuned to modern economic realities, and whether their proposed remedies are faithful to the New Testament's eschatological promise, are quite different questions.

In other parts of the New Testament we find replays of conventional scriptural ambivalences about wealth. In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, for instance, wealth seems to have no particular moral significance in itself, but the rich are strongly cautioned against putting their trust in the uncertainty of riches. James, on the other hand, has a vigorous polemic against the rich, apparently based on the pastoral experience of rich Christians who lorded it over the rest of the community and had no compunctions about getting richer by exploiting their poorer brethren (2:1-9). The distinctive turn in New Testament usage comes with Paul, and is also reflected in Revelation. Paul seems quite relaxed about what the world calls riches, suggesting almost an "easy come, easy go" attitude. Wealth does not really matter that much one way or another, so long as one is not attached to it, and so long as one shares generously with those in need (2 Cor. 8:1-10).

The folly of the "wisdom" of the world (1 Cor. 1:20-21) is in failing to recognize that the wealth that really counts is the wealth of God and of life in God. References to riches in Paul apply almost invariably to God, Christ, and the Christian community. It might be said that Paul "spiritualizes" wealth, but it is more accurate to say that he "eschatologizes" wealth and thereby radically relativizes its importance. Christ is the true *plousios* (2 Cor. 8:9), the word of God dwells "richly" in the community (Col. 3:16), and Christians are made rich through the poverty of Christ, which in the mystery of God is true wealth (Col. 1:27). For Paul, the eschatological reversal is not something just waiting to happen in the future. It is a way of living now that rejects worldly wisdom, which is prisoner to anxiety because it trusts in self and possessions rather than in God. Paul declares that, although poor, he makes many rich in the riches that really matter (2 Cor. 6:10). In this respect he is simply following Christ, who demonstrates that it is a law of life and salvation that the renunciation of one's own rights makes others rich.

In their *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Hauck and Kasch write, "Of every possession of earthly holding one must say that it is not wealth or security but simply an instrument in the ministry of love, with no dignity of its own. This is the substance of Paul's admonition to the Corinthians." At the risk of reaching, it does seem that in Paul we find a kind of fulfillment of the Indo-European root of *ploutos*, which, as mentioned earlier, means "to flow" or "to fill." The wealth that matters, according to Paul, is that which flows from the riches of God through Christ and is already, in an anticipatory mode, "filled" with the glory that is to be. There are in Paul no sweated moralisms about riches or the rich. The injunction to be generous to others is emphasized, for to be anxiously grasping is to interrupt, as it were, the flow. The chief point, however, is that once one has understood the true location of riches in God, everything else falls into place.

There is in Paul what might be called an eschatological lightheartedness, even playfulness, with respect to the present order, including worldly goods. "I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short; from now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor. 7:29-31). However long the time may be, the Christian's way of being in the world has already been transformed. "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). This makes possible a kind of taunting of the world's standards. "We are treated as imposters, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Cor. 6:8-10).

While taunting the world's standards, the Christian is not freed from obligations in the world; indeed he is freed to fulfill such obligations. This is evident in Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to give generously to help poorer brethren elsewhere. "The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Freed from anxiety, we can dare to be generous, "because God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work" (2 Cor. 9:6-9).

This Pauline lightheartedness about economic matters has erupted persistently in subsequent Christian history, but it has been as frequently suppressed by sobersided formulas for what would later be called "economic justice." Many commentators have succumbed to the temptation of dismissing Paul's relative indifference to economic justice—as well as to so much else that preoccupies politicized Christianity today—as a product of an "interim ethic" that assumed the imminent return of Christ in glory. It is doubtful, however, that Paul's recommended attitude toward worldly affairs, including economics, was substantively affected by eschatological schedules. His is a

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way of "being in the world" that can be accepted or rejected whether history's promised consummation is five years or five millennia removed.

In the biblical and subsequent Christian literature we find persistent jeremiads against the rich and against preoccupation with riches. In the last century and this, such strictures have been conventionally interpreted in a manner hostile to the capitalist mode of producing wealth. This too would seem to miss the point of the Pauline lightheartedness. The point is that wealth—having it or producing it—really does not matter that much. This point is missed both by the avaricious, who become captive to their possessions, and by religiously driven ideologues promoting designs for a just economic order. Both are in danger of attributing an ultimacy to something that is, at most, pre-penultimate. Both take wealth altogether too seriously. Of course, different attitudes toward wealth usually appear in mixed form rather than as pure types. The choice of poverty in monasticism, for example, can be depicted as a condemnation of worldly wealth, or as an exemplification of an eschatologically liberated way of life that radically relativizes the exigencies of money, and of much else.

Similarly—and contrary to many earnest arguments advanced about the connections between the Reformation and capitalism—it may be suggested that the Reformers' articulation of the Pauline doctrine of grace assisted economic enterprise chiefly by underscoring the truth that worldly success does not matter that much, that it does not matter ultimately. In the Calvinist tradition, economic achievement may have been motored less by its being viewed as a token of election than by the fact that a grace-based Pauline lightheartedness about worldly achievements created "free space" within which a variety of "callings" could be exercised in good conscience. The question of ultimate salvation is already attended to by the utterly gratuitous mercy of God. That being the case, Christian "vocations," also in the economic realm, are no longer a desperate quest for salvation but an exercise of grace-full insouciance in response to the gift already given.

The heavy breathing of the theologizing, moralizing, and even "salvationizing" of economic matters would seem to be a later phenomenon among Christians in the Reformation traditions. It is, for instance, dramatically evident in America in the Social Gospel movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ironically, it is also evident in the liberation theology of some Roman Catholics who have embraced with enthusiasm this aspect of late Protestantism. What appears as theologized activism in the Americas frequently has its roots in European, notably German, thought. With respect to the Social Gospel, the influence of Albrecht Ritschl was enormous, and Americans would continue to depend on that stream of liberalism as made more accessible by English writers such as R. H. Tawney, F. D. Maurice, and William Temple, all of whom were adamant in opposing laissez-faire capitalism.

The conscientious determination to deny to economics its sphere of freedom is evident, for instance, in John C. Bennett's *Christian Ethics and Social Policy* (1946). With respect to the themes encapsulated there, little has changed in the last half-century. Bennett's earnest moralizing of the economic sphere is to be found in the latest pronouncements on "economic justice" by oldline Protestant churches and, increasingly, by the Roman Catholic bishops in this country. Such pronouncements typically reflect an entrenched emphasis on the distribution of wealth rather than the creation of wealth, a greater concern for the means of production than for production. Indeed, in "harder" versions of this approach, there is a reversal of the Pauline view that economics does not matter that much. The economic structure, "systemically analyzed," is taken to be determinative of everything else—including the allegedly illusory liberation proposed in Paul's studied indifference toward economics.

Not surprisingly, theologized economic theories have been almost invariably socialist in their direction. It is not surprising because socialism is premised upon a refusal to accept the resistance of economics to "making sense," especially theological sense. The taken-for-granted nature of this view is evident in Paul Tillich's flat assertion, "Any serious Christian must be a socialist." Similarly, in the past century the maxim has been widely affirmed that socialism is the economics of which Christianity is the religion. The assumptions implicit in this viewpoint were endorsed also by "neo-orthodox" theologians who were on most questions vigorously opposed to the Ritschlian tradition of nineteenth-century liberalism. This was notably the case with Karl Barth, arguably the greatest Christian theologian of this century.

After World War II, when Barth was striving for an "evenhandedness" between East and West, his socialism was, at least in part, a strategy for ideological accommodation. In 1950 he wrote, "Anyone who does not want communism—and none of us do—should take socialism seriously." In his great *Church Dogmatics*, however, Barth leaves no doubt that the grounding of his economic views goes much deeper than mere strategic considerations. Barth treats economics under the rubric of "work" and "labor" within the context of the doctrine of creation. Work is relentlessly teleological, directed toward definite ends, and this he calls the "criterion of objectivity." The question to be asked of economic activity is: "Does the ostensible worker know what he wills and will what he knows?" What Barth calls "right work" is "obedience to the divine command." This means that "all dilettante or botched work, however high and noble its purposes and however rich its material profit, cannot possibly be right and is not therefore

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obedience."

There is little of the Pauline lightheartedness, never mind whimsy, in Barth's understanding of work. "We are either heart and soul in a thing or we take things easily. *Tertium non datur.*" Work is to advance significantly the human condition, although Barth allows that a proper end of work could include "even perhaps adornments of human existence." The latter is a reluctant allowance, however. Some so-called work is nothing more than amusing others, and while Barth says he does not "grudge" people the need to make a living, he is not prepared to call "worthy and valuable work" those activities that depend upon "the stupidity and superficiality, the vanity and bad taste, the errors and vices of numerous other people." He is certainly not prepared to describe as worthy work activity that is involved in the "almost unequivocally demonic process which consists in the amassing and multiplying of possessions expressed in financial calculations ... i.e., the 'capital' which in the hands of the relatively few, who pull all the strings, may equally well, in a way wholly [outside] the control of the vast majority and therefore quite arbitrarily or accidentally, be a source of salvation or perdition for whole nations or generations."

In such a system work is often "completely alien" to the worker, "being performed in the service of a sinister and heartless and perpetually ambiguous idol." Capitalists who say that such a system is necessary to produce wealth and provide jobs must be told that their claim is unacceptable. If they cannot change the system, "then the question is to be addressed the more acutely to the state, to the government or Parliament, whether it is in fact politically possible or legitimate to allow the so-called economy to be administered in this free, or rather ineffectual, manner." If the politicians are unresponsive, then appeal must be made to "the whole of human society," for "in the last analysis, it is society which has to grant work and define its aims." In the absence of clearly determined ends, "meaningless and nonsensical and worthless work constantly increases." Since it is possible that the great mass of employees view their work "in what is at bottom a 'capitalistic' or unthinking way in relation to the question of ends," it is not surprising that the owners and employers take advantage of that mindlessness.

Work must therefore be objective—that is, directed to proper ends, and worthy of human beings. It must also be "human work" in the sense that it is "a social act involving association and comradeship." The vital claims of workers are fulfilled only if their work is "co-ordinated" with that of others. Some work may be done in happy and innocent freedom from this concern for coordination, but that is the rare exception. There are those who lift up the delights and benefits of competition, as though work were a contest in which the best receives the prize, but they forget that "*the sphere of human work is not a playing field*" (emphasis added). Economic competition becomes a deadly contest in which "the reward is no more and no less than existence itself." "Hence," writes Barth, "there is no fun in this contest." Against such contest there must be a counter-movement of setting limits on economic freedom, and "where the command of God is heard it will always be a summons to counter-movements of this kind."

In Barth's bleak view, work "under the sign of competition" sets one man against the other "with force and cunning, and there cannot fail to be innumerable prisoners, wounded, and dead." Because of the unjust distribution of the ownership of the means of production, "it can hardly be denied that on the whole, at least in the West, the modern industrial process does in fact rest on the principle of the exploitation of some by others." Barth wants to make clear that he has no illusions about the "solution" proposed by the socialisms of the East. What he describes as "state socialism" might turn out to be "only a new and perhaps even crasser form of the oppression and exploitation of man by man." But for those in the West who live under the prevailing capitalist system it is necessary "to assert the command of God in face of this form, and to keep to the 'left' in opposition to its champions, i.e., to confess that [we are] fundamentally on the side of the victims of this disorder and to espouse their cause." Barth says the Church should not "identify its message" with any economic directions, but a little later he declares, "The Christian community both can and should espouse the cause of this or that branch of social progress or even socialism in the form most helpful at a specific time and place and in a specific situation."

The essentially socialist Barth declares that work must be objectively directed to ends, must be worthy, must be humanly coordinated, and must, in addition, be reflective and limited. It is on the last score that we encounter a break from the earlier assertion that the sphere of human work is not a playing field. In discussing the limits of work, Barth emphasizes that the worth of a human being is not exhaustively defined by his work, and he reflects especially on the dignity of the old, the sick, and the disabled. For all of us there is a need for the "Sabbath rest" from work, which we can undertake with good conscience for we know that "God is in charge." This quite different view of work is elaborated in an extended note worthy of quotation:

> Outward and inward work will be done with more rather than less seriousness once a man realizes that what he desires and does and achieves thereby, when measured by the work of God which it may attest, cannot be anything but play, i.e., a childlike imitation and reflection of the fatherly action of God which as such is a true and proper action. When children play properly,

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> of course, they do so with supreme seriousness and devotion. Even in play, if a man does not really play properly, he is a spoilsport. We are summoned to play properly. But we must not imagine that what we desire and are able to do is more than play. Human work would certainly not be worse done, but both individually and as a whole it would be done much better, if it were not done with the frightful seriousness which is so often bestowed upon it just because fundamentally we do not think that we have to take God seriously, and therefore we must take ourselves the more terribly seriously, this usually being the surest way to invoke the spirit of idleness and sloth by way of compensation.

In that aside, a wiser Barth (or so I would suggest) would seem to be taking back much of what he had earlier urged with such "frightful seriousness." Here we detect the working out of a Pauline lightheartedness more in accord with Barth's more usual way of radically relativizing the pretensions of the present time's sweated exigencies. There is a necessary whimsy in the living of the Christian life, since we know that "God is in charge," and we are by no means sure what he is up to in the contingencies of history. While the gravamen of Barth's discussion excludes whimsy from the consideration of wealth, it is featured very prominently in his understanding of human creativity in other spheres. His treatment of Mozart is an outstanding case in point.

The creative order, says Barth, is ambiguous, containing a Yes and a No, but we are not always able to sort out the positive from the negative. But no matter. "If God Himself has comprehended creation in its totality and made it His own in His Son, it is for us to acquiesce without thinking that we know better, without complaints, reproach, or dismay." And here, in a longish but moving aside, he reflects on Mozart:

> Why is it that this man is so incomparable? Why is it that for the receptive he has produced in almost every bar he conceived and composed a type of music for which "beautiful" is not a fitting epithet: music which for the true Christian is not mere entertainment, enjoyment, or edification but food and drink. . . . Why is it possible to hold that Mozart has a place in theology, especially in the doctrine of creation and also in eschatology, although he was not a father of the Church, does not seem to have been a particularly active Christian, and was a Roman Catholic, apparently leading what might appear to us a rather frivolous existence when not occupied in his work? It is possible to give him this position because he knew something about creation in its total goodness that neither the real fathers of the Church nor our Reformers, neither the orthodox nor Liberals, neither the exponents of natural theology nor those heavily armed with the "Word of God," and certainly not the Existentialists, nor indeed any other great musicians before and after him, either know or can express as he did. . . . In the face of the problem of theodicy, Mozart had the peace of God which far transcends all the critical or speculative reason that praises and reproves. This problem lay behind him. Why then concern himself with it? He had heard, and causes those who have ears to hear, even today, what we shall not see until the end of time—the whole context of providence. . . . He heard concretely and therefore his compositions were and are total music. Hearing creation unresentfully and impartially, he did not produce merely his own music but that of creation, its twofold and yet harmonious praise of God. . . . He was remarkably free from the mania for self-expression. He simply offered himself as the agent by which little bits of horn, metal, and catgut could serve as the voices of creation, sometimes leading, sometimes accompanying, and sometimes in harmony. . . . Mozart causes us to hear that even on the [negative] side, and therefore in its totality, creation praises its Master and is therefore perfect. . . . Mozart has thus created order for those who have ears to hear, and he has done it better than any scientific deduction could. This is the point which I wish to make.

And the point that I wish to make is, quite simply, that Barth's discussion of work and the economy in the fourth volume of his treatment of creation would be much more persuasive had he brought it into closer conversation with what he says about Mozart and creation in the third volume. Barth depicts Mozart as an exemplar of Pauline lightheartedness who dared to act upon the knowledge that "God is in charge," and that his creativity is theocentric and eschatological—which is to say that it is freed from the teleological calculations of social utility. This, one might suggest, is the freedom that Barth should more clearly have related to the economic sphere in connection with the form of creativity that is the production of wealth. The wonder that Barth accorded to aesthetic creativity he was not willing to extend to economic creativity. He readily acknowledged a "hidden hand" in Mozart's work, but not in the work of others that might equally be said to bear witness to the goodness of creation.

The connections that Barth does not explore are suggestively developed by another theological giant of this century, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His view of human creativity, also in the economic sphere, is not only theocentric but insistently Christocentric. Our labor is not a creation out of nothing, like God's creation, but "a making of new things on the basis

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of the creation by God. . . . The first creation of Cain was the city, the earthly counterpart of the eternal city of God. There follows the invention of fiddles and flutes, which afford to us on earth a foretaste of the music of heaven." The extraction and processing of metals, the building of homes, and all our other activities are, whether we know it or not, a readying of the world for the coming of Christ. "Through the divine mandate of labor there is to come into being a world which, knowingly or not, is waiting for Christ, is designed for Christ, is open to Christ, serves Him and glorifies Him." Although all this is under the sign of Cain, it has nonetheless been redeemed. For the Christian, the shadowed side is, as Barth said of Mozart, "behind him."

This confident, playful participation in creation, says Bonhoeffer, has its own integrity and freedom that must be protected, especially by the government and from the government. "Government maintains created things in their proper order, but it cannot itself engender life; it is not creative." People are creative in carrying out the divine mandates in labor, family, and the community of faith. Government is not the subject or originator of these fields of human endeavor. "If it asserts its authority beyond the limits of its assigned task it will in the long run forfeit its genuine authority over these fields." Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis in 1945, understood the danger of the totalitarian temptation to have the state impose coordination (*Gleichschaltung*) upon the society. Against the claim of the state to represent, indeed to be identical with, "the people," Bonhoeffer asserts that "in Scripture there is no special commission of God for the people." The Christian knows, says Bonhoeffer, "that the people grows from below, but that government is instituted from above." Creativity, growth, a serendipitous discovery of possibilities—all of these are exercised in the arena of freedom that is from below, from the actions and interactions of free persons who are, knowingly or not, participating in God's continuing creation.

Other formative Christian theologians of this century have seemed to share Bonhoeffer's understanding of the fortuitous nature of economic growth and well-being. A recent and generally sympathetic study of John Courtney Murray chides him for having had little to say about economic justice, a subject that has become theologically *de rigueur* in the last three decades of Christian-Marxist dialogue and liberation theology. One suspects that Murray did not spend much time on "economic justice" because he was not sure what it meant, and that he offered no prescriptions for the creation of wealth because he knew none—other than abiding by the restraints inherent in what he called "the American experiment in ordered liberty."

Reinhold Niebuhr, on the other hand, had a very thoroughly developed theology of socialist economics in his earlier years. In his mature years he abandoned his socialist enthusiasms and expressed grudging admiration for the productivity of economic liberalism. It seems, however, that neither Murray nor Niebuhr was tempted to write a theology of economics—Murray because it seemed quite unnecessary, and Niebuhr because in that effort he was once burned and twice shy. Economics, one might suggest, appears as the dismal science precisely because it is in such stark contrast to the freedom of economic activity, which is anything but dismal. Efforts to theologize economics tend to produce dismal theology.

Economics, like some other aspects of life, is too important to be taken seriously. At least one should be careful about taking it with theological seriousness. A theologically informed appreciation of economic life and the production of wealth should be marked by a sense of whimsy and wonder in the face of the fortuitous, contingent, chancy, and unpredictable realities of economic behavior. Such an appreciation will have less to do with Karl Barth's criteria of economic justice and more with what Johan Huizinga describes as *Homo Ludens*. To suggest such a connection between wealth and whimsy, between productivity and playfulness, is not to say that economics is of little consequence or unworthy of our attention. Intelligent playfulness, however, is only made possible by faith—just as Pauline lightheartedness is only thinkable on the far side of the Cross, and just as Mozart could do what he did only because the intimidating anxieties about ultimate rights and wrongs were, by the grace of God, behind him.

The economic sphere is a playing field, after all. Jeremiads against pride, greed, and avarice will always be in order. People can take the game too seriously, just as the Mets can take the pennant too seriously and lose both the pleasure of playing and the pennant. Of course, at the time it is being played, the game may be totally engrossing and almost painfully earnest. If the game is not to consume the entirety of one's life, its time must be limited by other times; this is the profound wisdom of the Sabbath rest. Any game, including economics, can become an idol to which we surrender our existence, at which point it ceases to be a game. This truth applies as well to the wealthy stockbroker as to the overly earnest small entrepreneur, and to the poor *campesino* who resigns himself to what he believes to be his economic fate. In each case, the tragedy is that the game has become a god.

Theologians and preachers should be in the business of urging people to play fairly, but should not presume to claim any privileged knowledge about rules of economic fairness that are not derived from general virtues for living decently. Above all, players need to be reminded that it is only a game, albeit an essential game. Christian theology, one may conclude, says the most important things about economics when it is

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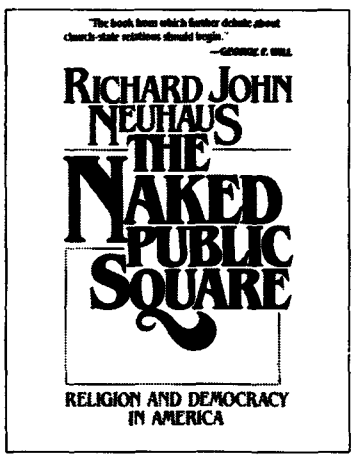
not trying to make sense out of economics. Barth, for example, writes most wisely about economics when he is writing about Mozart. Opening a new pizza parlor, designing a new widget, or manufacturing a better automobile are all somebody's Violin Concerto in D Major. It may not be our idea of Mozart, but then the people doing those things didn't ask our opinion. If we asked for their opinion, we might discover that they don't think too highly of people who write essays for journals such as this, either. So, if we are not moved to applaud one another's enterprises, we can at least refrain from jeering and wish one another well with the diverse games on which we all depend—we more obviously on theirs than they on ours.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How to Think About the Family: Ten Suggestions

David Blankenhorn

Over the past decade, the "family" has gone public. Popular opinion is clearly worried about it. Everyone seems to agree that it is changing. Politicians of both parties insist that they care about it. Legislators and lobbyists daily announce their plans to help it. Media commentators increasingly comment on it. Scholars research it. The baby boom generation, approaching age forty, has now discovered it. Corporations, worried about their future labor force, create new personnel policies in order to accommodate it. Though important exceptions exist, most people today seem to be in favor of it.

Yet what does "it" mean? In Washington today "family policy" is a term unburdened by any specific meaning. The words are simply a political Rorschach test, designed to convey whatever anyone wants them to convey. Want to help the poor? Want to cut taxes? Want to support working women? Want children to pray in school? If you do, or do not, then you want "family policy." Similarly, "family" and "family values," while frequently invoked, usually amount to little more than rhetorical Trojan Horses, intended to camouflage any number of special interests and hidden agendas.

The confusing, often contentless nature of the family debate certainly retards and distorts the policy-making process. But more importantly, it impoverishes our broader understanding of what may be our society's most urgent social question.

What is to be done? Is it possible to strengthen the family as an institution as we approach the new century? Few questions in our time are as important as this one. At stake is nothing less than the kind of society we wish to be. Yet to strengthen the family, we must first strengthen and clarify the terms of our public discourse. I would like to offer, therefore, not a full-blown agenda to improve family well-being, but rather a more limited set of proposals to improve our debate on the family.

Many people, of course, will disagree with some or even most of these ideas. But perhaps these proposals can contribute to a refined conceptual framework: an analytic and normative perspective on the family that reflects widely held American values, that can help overcome the polarizations of the past decade, and that points the way toward a new consensus on the nation's family agenda for the 1990s. Call what follows the Ten Suggestions.

One. Critique today's prevailing cultural ethos of "adult individualism." Quite simply, this ethos is harmful to family well-being. We are becoming, more than ever before, an atomized, adult-centered society in which expressive individualism—what has been called the "untrammeled self"—has become a governing cultural ideal, overshadowing and to some degree displacing other cultural norms, such as civic virtue, religious belief, and family values. At the same time, dissatisfaction with this ethos is growing in our culture—in part because modern individualism possesses a mixed record at best in what is supposedly its strength: increasing the level of overall adult happiness. It seems that our society, or at least much of it, is in fact yearning to reconnect with purposes larger than the self, particularly the family. What would help is a language and an analysis of the family to give voice to that yearning.

Two. Analyze the family primarily through the eyes

DAVID BLANKENHORN *is President of the Institute for American Values in New York City. This essay is adapted from a chapter in the forthcoming book* A New Commitment: Family Values and Family Policies in the 1990s, *David Blankenhorn* et al., *eds.*

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of children. Not exclusively, just primarily: child-rearing, after all, is probably the family's most important social function. Such an analytic vantage point would help avoid many of the hidden agendas that now attach themselves to the family debate. It would also help to soften—and even perhaps to inform—the inevitable clash between the needs of adult women and those of adult men.

Consider, for example, the current debate over whether single-parent families should be judged as better, worse, or "just as good as" families with two parents. If the children involved were given the choice, which would they choose, and why? Or take the example of corporate day care for sick children—a growing trend in the American workplace, widely celebrated in the media as "pro-family." Perhaps it is. Certainly it helps the corporation: it reduces absenteeism. And it may also help parents. But is it an equally unmixed blessing for the sick child? I do not claim that we should ignore adult needs. Nor do I claim that these issues—either single-parent families or care for sick children—are simple ones. They are not. But I do claim that viewing them through the eyes of children offers an essential perspective that is frequently absent in today's family debate.

Three. Formulate family policy "from the inside out"—that is, from the distinctive vantage point of family functions and the family as an institution, rather than from the imperatives of broader policy or political goals. If family policy is to be worthy of the name—if it is to be different from simply ideas to help people—it must derive solely from what might be called "family business": to marry; to bring children into the world, raising them to be healthy, productive citizens; to pass on basic social and moral values to the next generation; to care for aged parents and grandparents; and most fundamentally, to build and maintain those bonds of affection, nurturance, mutual support, and lifetime commitment that form the very definition of family life. Establishing this criterion would locate the family itself at the center of "family policy." It would force many extraneous ideas—currently hitching a ride on the family express—to get off the train, hopefully to find their rightful destination. Less baggage and the proper passengers: that would be an enormous blessing.

Four. Recognize that the American family dilemma is androgynous. In particular, it is not reducible to a "woman's problem" or a "woman's responsibility." Thus, strengthening family life in the 1990s cannot and should not mean the repeal of the past thirty years of new opportunities for women in the workplace and in public life. Just as today's cultural ethos of individualism affects men just as much as women, so must a revived ethos of family life affect the behavior and priorities of both sexes.

Five. Rehabilitate, for modern conditions, the "good family man." This compliment was once widely heard in our culture—bestowed, to those deserving it, as a badge of honor. Rough translation: "He puts his family first." Ponder the three words: *good* (moral values); *family* (purposes larger than the self); and *man* (a norm of masculinity). Yet today, especially within elite culture, the phrase sounds antiquated, almost embarrassing. Part of the reason, of course, is the modern gender role revolution: the "good family man" carries a lingering connotation of "sole breadwinner" and "head of the family." Yet it is also true that contemporary American culture no longer celebrates, among its various and competing norms of masculinity, a widely shared and compelling ideal of the man who puts his family first. Since some, even much, of today's family dilemma stems simply from male abandonment and male flight from family obligation, surely we must revive for the new century a widely shared conception of the good family man.

Six. Stop the special-interest pleading, ubiquitous in today's family debate, that pits the "working" family against the "traditional" family. Liberals tend to champion the former, conservatives the latter. Each side frequently twists the numbers in an attempt to define the other out of existence; each seems morally dismissive of the other; each acts as if family policy were a zero-sum game in which one family can gain only at the expense of another.

But all families deserve support, not just some. Those parents who stay at home with children are not bad, or quaint, or even unusual. Yet these parents, who deserve our praise and support, are frequently told by our culture that they are old-fashioned, outmoded, irrelevant. At the same time, working parents also deserve support—new policies from both government and employers to help them balance the demands of family and work. Any family policy, from the left or the right, that seeks to help one type of family by belittling another is simply not acceptable.

Seven. A rule of thumb: While new government programs and policies will not solve the American family dilemma, they can and should play a role in strengthening family life and, at a minimum, in ameliorating some of the negative consequences of family decline. From the right, we hear that government is the main enemy, since the state inherently erodes family autonomy. We are warned: "Look what government is doing to you!" From the left, we hear that government is the main ally, since public authority can assist families in need. We are entreated: "Look what government can do for you!" This familiar dichotomy—long the dividing line in the politics of the modern welfare state—needlessly polarizes the family debate. The issue is neither the size of government, nor some inherent quality (good or bad) of public authority, but rather the relationship of specific policies to family well-being.

Government programs should seldom, if ever, seek to replace private family functions. "Family policies" that simply facilitate the transfer of family functions to public authorities—for example, child care policies

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that in effect reduce parental authority and choice—may be desirable on other grounds, but they can hardly be described as strengthening the family as an institution. At the same time, the tools of government can and must be used, not to replace families, but to empower them and to foster their well-being. Daniel Patrick Moynihan once observed that, in the long run, it is culture, not politics, that determines the health of a society. That is the conservatives' truth. But, he added, politics can influence culture. That is the liberals' truth.

Eight. Encourage, and in some cases require, private-sector employers to recognize that their employees are also family members. Working parents, fathers as well as mothers, need new opportunities to balance work and family: family-leave options, part-time and job-sharing opportunities, flexible work hours, and other family-oriented workplace policies.

Nine. Recognize that the family debate, in large part, is a debate about cultural values. Yet an influential current of opinion today, especially within elite culture, views any set of unambiguous norms with suspicion, fearing them to be oppressive and overly judgmental. This belief that norms themselves are the problem—that the best ethos regarding the family is one of moral agnosticism—is not only historically unprecedented, but is itself an important contributor to the American family dilemma. With the establishment of normlessness comes a frequent refusal among participants in the family debate to state clearly what their guiding values are. It is unhelpful when scholars assert that values do not or should not influence scholarship. If we could, in fact, somehow remove values from the family debate, there would be very little of importance left to say.

Ten. Strive for a new consensus on "family values." Even in our pluralistic and often culturally divided society, surely there exist some broadly shared "family values" of deep social importance. And surely people interested in family policy should understand and debate these values—not in order to legislate or police them, but simply in order to know whether a proposed family policy is supportive of them or undermines them. In this spirit, I propose some beginning definitions.

We value families. The family is society's primary institution for raising children, caring for the elderly, and passing on and developing the values of society. It is usually the source of both our greatest loves and our greatest sorrows. It is the main mediating institution between the individual and the state—the basic social unit of our culture. For these reasons, most of us see the family as our central and most enduring commitment beyond the self.

We value marriage. The marital commitment is a foundation of strong families. While divorce may be the least bad alternative for a damaged marriage, today's high divorce rate is a troubling sign for families. We value marriage as an equal partnership, based on shared commitment, compromise, and responsibility, not domination or inequality.

We value children. We see in children our hopes for the future. While recognizing the primary responsibility of parents in child rearing, we also affirm that raising children is more than a series of private choices—it is also a social imperative that should be supported by other social institutions, by the workplace, and by public policy.

We value parents. Parents are a child's first and most influential teachers, and a child's major providers of love, guidance, and protection. The parental role is socially invaluable and irreplaceable; it should be honored and supported by society. Parenthood is a serious responsibility that should not be entered into lightly or casually. While many divorced or widowed parents are admirably successful ones, few would deny that the duties of parenthood are best met by two parents working together in marriage. Moreover, bringing a child into the world outside of marriage, or when parents are too young or unprepared to be real parents, is almost always personally and socially harmful.

We value our elders. Caring for our elders is one of the family's most important functions, one that should be facilitated and encouraged by other social institutions and by public policy. Moreover, we recognize the unique contributions elders can make: to the economy, to child care and teaching, and to our broader cultural life.

We value community. Institutions that make up community life—the school, the church, the synagogue, the workplace association, the service and charitable organization—are enriched by strong families. The institutions of community also enrich family life by extending our concerns beyond the family to the broader society.

We affirm basic moral values as part of the heritage we received from our parents and will develop and pass on to our children. These values of character and citizenship include honesty, respect for others and for the law, recognition of the link between effort and reward, and commitment to the benefits and responsibilities of living in a democracy. Other institutions, from schools to the media, should support and reinforce parental efforts to teach and pass on basic values.

We see the need for societal concern, reflected in public and private sector policies, that will strengthen all families, empowering them to realize and build upon the family values that form the cornerstone of our culture. ◻

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Religion and the Life of Learning

Mark R. Schwehn

What can we know? How should we live? In what or whom should we hope? A historian might fruitfully divide Western intellectual life into periods or cultures according to which one of these three questions was the central and controlling one for them. But this imaginary (and ambitious!) historian would find that he or she could not apply this principle of organization to the time after about 1980. Something astonishing appears to have happened. For the first time in history the *answers* to all three questions seem, for a large number of intellectuals at least, to depend completely upon the answer to the prior question: "Who are *we* ?"

I find this development disturbingly problematic, but it does provide, I believe, the most relevant and urgent context for the consideration of questions that address the prospective relationships between religion and higher learning or spirituality and education today. I shall accordingly try in the essay that follows to do four things. First, I will outline more fully my own sense of our present predicament. Second, I will reflect upon how we arrived at this situation. Third, I will address some of the difficulties that attend communitarian accounts of knowledge and truth. Finally, I shall argue that in order to realize its own best aspirations, the modern academy must seek to retrieve and revivify within its communal life certain virtues that arose originally within religious communities.

I

Of the three basic human questions posed above, the epistemological question (What or how can we know?) was the last to be superseded by the question of community (Who are *we* ?). Since the seventeenth century and until very recently, both the ethical question (How should we live?) and the religious question (In what or whom should we hope?) were superseded by the epistemological question. Thus, for example, before addressing the ethical question, moral philosophers felt obliged first to demonstrate that ethical discourse really was cognitively meaningful. In a similar manner, theologians often felt obliged to show how knowledge of God was possible before they proceeded to address religious questions whose answers presupposed the existence of a deity. Epistemology was thought to be foundational for all other inquiries. A more exact way of formulating the distinctiveness of our present situation would be to say that the community question has, in the last decade or so, replaced the epistemological question as foundational for all other inquiries.

As a way of both documenting and deepening our sense of this decisive shift in the current climate of opinion, I shall consider briefly two very influential books that appeared within four years of one another, Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) and Parker Palmer's *To Know As We Are Known* (1983). Although the two books differ from one another in several important respects, they both concern themselves centrally with epistemological matters, and they converge from strikingly different directions upon the question of community. Rorty, an avowed secular humanist, writes from a position at the very center of the academic establishment, yet his book, in spite of its sometimes very technical discourse, is still widely discussed outside the academy. Palmer, a committed Christian, writes from a position peripheral to the academic establishment, yet his book continues to find large and receptive audiences within the secular academy as well as outside it. Thus, the two books together both evince and advance the community question as the most vital theme within contemporary intellectual life.

MARK R. SCHWEHN *is Dean of Christ College at Valparaiso University.*

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Both Rorty and Palmer develop powerful arguments against the epistemological scheme that has dominated Western thought since at least the seventeenth century. Rorty, who refers to this scheme as the "mirror of nature" or "foundationalism," criticizes it from within the tradition of professional philosophy. Most of his book is a history of the unavailing efforts of philosophers, since the time of Descartes, to find certainty, to discover a set of sensations ("raw feels" or clear and distinct ideas) or terms (analytical truths, the symbols of mathematical logic) that would provide a secure foundation for all human inquiries and activities.

According to Rorty, philosophers have hoped to find a way of securing an absolute fit between our knowledge of the world and the world itself, to show that in at least *one* area of intellectual endeavor human knowledge really does "mirror" reality. And for most of the last three-hundred-and-fifty years this effort to ground all human knowledge has focused upon the physical sciences; indeed, "since the period of Descartes and Hobbes, the assumption that scientific discourse was normal discourse and that all other discourse needed to be modeled upon it has been the standard motive for philosophizing."

Rorty not only demonstrates that the foundationalist project has in its own terms failed, he also shows how it led philosophy to abandon its proper subject. Through arguments that are too intricate and extensive to summarize here, Rorty shows how a series of philosopers, including especially Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger, but also including Wilfred Sellars, Hilary Putnam, and Thomas Kuhn, have exposed foundationalism as a fundamentally misguided effort. But Rorty is even more interested in the baleful effects of foundationalism than he is in charting its collapse. "The Cartesian change from mind-as-reason to mind-as-inner-area," he writes, "was not the triumph of the prideful individual subject freed from scholastic shackles so much as the triumph of the quest for certainty over the quest for wisdom. From that time forward, the way was open for philosophers either to attain the rigor of the mathematician or the mathematical physicist, or to explain the appearance of rigor in these fields, rather than to help people attain peace of mind. Science, rather than living, became philosophy's subject, and epistemology its center."

Palmer, to some extent like Rorty, begins with a critique of the dominant epistemological scheme of the last three centuries. Palmer calls this scheme "objectivism," and he describes it not so much in terms of a history of ideas or a group of thinkers as in terms of a set of pedagogical practices that characterize the contemporary academy. Thus, Palmer's focus remains in one respect broader and in another respect narrower than Rorty's. Its comparative breadth consists in Palmer's attention to the way in which most teachers teach, regardless of whether they are teaching philosophy, literature, religion, or physics. Palmer's critique therefore extends to practices far beyond the narrower confines of professional philosophy. On the other hand, Palmer's "objectivism" refers to the dominant strain or to an amalgam of two strains (empiricism and a certain kind of pragmatism) within the larger epistemological project that Rorty calls the "mirror of nature." These distinctions are important, because they help in part to explain why Rorty finally argues for an abandonment of epistemology altogether, whereas Palmer seeks to replace or supersede objectivism with another epistemology.

The sources of Palmer's critique of modern epistemology are very different from Rorty's. Whereas Rorty relies exclusively upon philosophical writings that have subverted the foundationalist project, Palmer draws primarily upon Christian classics and upon a tradition of Christian spirituality that he traces back to the desert fathers. Moreover, Palmer's indictment of objectivism stems from his insight that epistemologies have moral trajectories, that ways of knowing are not morally neutral but morally directive. Objectivism, he demonstrates, places the would-be knower in an alienated, even an antagonistic position over and against the known world. Impelled by curiosity and the mania for control, objectivism fractures the bonds of community and tends inherently toward violence. In view of this violent trajectory of objectivism, Palmer argues, "we must recover from our spiritual tradition the models and methods of knowing as an act of love."

Yet another apparent difference between Rorty and Palmer reveals, upon closer scrutiny, the presence of a common spirit or at least a common undertaking between the two men, one that manifests itself most fully in something of a quest for community. Palmer always uses the term "objective" to describe the antagonistic posture of the isolated, active knower who seeks, for purposes of manipulation and control, to grasp, through the scientific method, the passive objects of the world in such a way that the knowledge that results "will reflect the nature of the objects in question rather than the knower's whims." Rorty, on the other hand, observes that we use the term "objective" sometimes to mean "representing things as they really are" and at other times to designate "the presence of, or the hope for, agreement among inquirers." He argues that these two meanings of "objective" are by no means coextensive, and he decidely prefers the latter to the former designation. Indeed, according to Rorty's own preferred view of knowledge—"epistemological behaviorism," as he somewhat infelicitously calls it—"we understand knowledge when we understand the social justification of belief, and thus have no need to view it as accuracy of representation."

Though this view is by no means identical to the one that Palmer advocates, some of the affinities

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between the two are quite striking. Thus, for example, Palmer insists that both knowledge and truth are communal terms. Knowledge is not the result of the isolated individual's efforts to mirror the world; it is instead a form of responsible relationship, even a "means to relationship," with others. Knowing "becomes a reunion of separated beings whose primary bond is not of logic but of love"; truth is the name of this "community of relatedness." For Rorty, once we see knowledge as a matter of conversation and of social practice, rather than as an attempt to mirror nature, truth is "what is *good for us* to believe" rather than privileged "contact with reality." However much they may differ on other matters, both Rorty and Palmer understand knowledge and community as correlative terms.

They also both absorb aspects of the projects they criticize into the fabric of the enterprises they promote. Thus, Palmer recognizes that the objectivist project has "helped to untangle some very twisted strands of the human soul." And he retains in his own epistemological scheme objectivism's honorable opposition to self-centeredness. Rorty wishes to retain epistemological behaviorism's understanding of objectivity, even as he argues for the abandonment of epistemology-centered philosophy in favor of hermeneutics.

Rorty's description of the hermeneutical or edifying philosopher resembles Palmer's description of the knower-in-community. Instead of passing judgment upon which discourses are rational and which are not, or seeking to "ground" all discourse in a common set of terms or procedures, the hermeneutical philosopher "sees the relations between various discourses as those of strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers, but where the hope of agreement is never lost so long as the conversation lasts. This hope is not a hope for the discovery of antecedently existing common ground, but simply hope for agreement, or, at least, exciting and fruitful disagreement." Above all else, the edifying philosopher takes responsibility for keeping this conversation alive, not by "finding the proper set of terms into which all the contributions should be translated," but by being willing "to pick up the jargon of the interlocutor, rather than translating it into one's own." The participants in this conversational endeavor—this *societas*—are "persons whose paths through life have fallen together, united by civility rather than by a common goal, much less a common ground."

Rorty and Palmer do not finally share a "common ground" (a matter that I shall reconsider at a later point). I have nevertheless tried to discern here, by tacking back and forth between them and noting certain revealing points of intersection, the shape of the conversation that provides the current context for discussion about religion and higher education. The most important feature of that context seems to be the very recent but very striking ascendancy of the community question over all others. Before attempting to advance the discussion about religion and higher education within this context, and because the context itself seems so novel, I think it is important to enlarge the historical perspective upon our present situation by way of providing some correctives to the historical accounts that are either supplied or implied by Rorty and Palmer. Developing these correctives will also sharpen the features of some of the problems that are peculiar to our present situation.

II

Let me begin by stating as succinctly as I can the story of how we came to this present pass. The outlines of what Rorty calls foundationalism and what Palmer calls objectivism were developed during the seventeenth century by thinkers such as Descartes, Hobbes, and Locke. But two centuries elapsed before these ideas attained cultural dominion in the West (or at least in the Anglo-American portion of it). That dominion was completed by four concurrent and overlapping developments: the rise of professionalism, the emergence of the academic disciplines as we know them today, the making of the modern research university, and the shift from a mechanistic (because based upon physics) to a developmental (because based upon Darwinian biology) view of knowledge and culture.

During this same period (roughly 1870-1900), however, there arose several powerful critiques of the dominant, because recently institutionalized, epistemology. Nietzsche inaugurated one line of criticism that has continued through the works of Heidegger and Gadamer. Charles Peirce and William James began another one that has continued through Dewey and the Chicago pragmatists to Quine and Rorty. These various lines have by now threatened to undermine foundationalism altogether, but the institutional superstructures that secured foundationalism's triumph remain intact. We stand in something of the same position relative to anti-foundationalism as was once occupied by early nineteenth-century American colleges relative to foundationalism. We are, to speak in sociologese, in a period of cultural lag, or, to speak more poetically, we are "caught between two worlds, the one dead, the other powerless to be born."

It is important to stress that the two dominant lines of criticism noted above began during the 1870s and 1880s at precisely the same time that the modern research university emerged as a new institution of higher learning in America. Palmer, though he recognizes the appearance of significant dissent from the objectivist position, suggests that it has been only recently developed and voiced. And partly for this reason, he amalgamates one of these dissenting lines, pragmatism, with empiricism to describe objectivism.

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Pragmatism, however, at least the pragmatism of William James, actually arose as a sharp protest against the kind of thinking that Palmer calls objectivism but which was called "positivism" at the time that James was writing in the 1870s and 1880s. Thus, for example, James' earliest writings contain detailed attacks against what he called the "correspondence theory of truth." He always insisted that we are "coefficients" of the truth we seek to know, neither alienated from nor antagonistic to the world of which we are a part. He argued, moreover, that the "whole man is at work within us"—our feelings, our faiths, our intuitions, and our hopes, as well as our thoughts and theories—when we seek knowledge. James was, as all of his writings attest, an unrelenting enemy of the objectivist or positivist account of knowing as a mere matter of logic and dispassionate reasoning.

Palmer ignores this Jamesean strain of pragmatism, because his own thinking was shaped, as he tells us in one of the most powerfully confessional portions of his book, by a different strand of the pragmatic tradition. He came to believe that knowledge emerges through the imposition of order upon the chaos of experience, and that truth is just a name for whatever "works" to solve certain problems, for whatever eventuates in a satisfactory manipulation of the world. This vulgarly practical and relativistic theory of truth perhaps most closely approximates the current, popular sense of the word "pragmatic," and one can find warrants for it in the writings of all the pragmatists, even including some of James'.

Nevertheless, as Richard Bernstein has observed, the American pragmatists—especially Peirce, James, and Dewey—had already thematized an anti-foundational approach to philosophy before the First World War. In addition, they had emphasized the "social character of the self and the need to nurture a critical community of inquirers." What Peirce long ago wrote about philosophers applies today to all of those who seek to discover knowledge and truth. Because, according to Peirce, our understanding of matters is invariably fallible and partial—both in the sense of "biased" and in the sense of seeing only a part—"we individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the *community* of philosophers."

In sum, we should not permit the cultural ascendancy during most of the twentieth century of a vulgar strain of pragmatism to obscure the very promising alternatives to objectivism that were developed by Peirce, James, and others as early as 1880. One strain of pragmatism has combined with logical positivism to produce objectivism. But another strain of pragmatism—its most original strain and one that is still discernible in Rorty—is very congenial to Palmer's own critique of objectivism.

There is, however, another and better reason why Palmer ignored James and other late-nineteenth-century critics of objectivism: he did not set out to write a piece of intellectual history. Rather, as noted earlier, he derived objectivism from current pedagogical practice, and he never intended to suggest that objectivism, in the complete sense of the word, could be found in the writings of any given thinker or set of thinkers. Yet if Palmer is correct, as I think he is, in taking objectivism to be *the* epistemology that informs the practices of the modern university, and if I am correct in suggesting that James and others had already fashioned powerful alternative theories of knowledge as early as 1880, a vital historical question arises. How, given the presence of several conflicting epistemologies, did one of them come to dominate the modern university?

We might expect to find an answer to this question from Rorty, who is explicitly and deliberately historical in a way that Palmer is not. Rorty's history is, however, purely "internalist" by design. He attends only to the development of ideas within the discipline of philosophy, not to external considerations—social, economic, technological, and political—that impinged in various ways upon that development and doubtless propelled it in certain directions. Though a complete historical explanation of the ascendancy of objectivism or foundationalism would require an analysis of all of these conditions, only one of them—the political factor—is crucially relevant to my present purpose.

That purpose is to issue an emphatic historical reminder to all of us who criticize the ethos of objectivism in the name of communitarian accounts of knowledge and truth. The principal danger inherent in communitarianism is tribalism and the subsequent violence that often arises among rival tribes, each of them inflexibly wedded to their respective versions of the truth. I would argue that objectivism arose initially and that it subsequently attained cultural dominion primarily because it was intended by its architects as a way of *avoiding* violence. We must at least add the desire for civil peace to the two desires, curiosity and control, that Palmer has identified as the motives for objectivism.

Hobbes and Descartes manifested this pacific motive most vividly of all the seventeenth-century advocates of objectivism or foundationalism. "Fear and I were born twins," Hobbes said, remarking upon the fact that his birthday fell on the same day that England trembled under the onslaught of the Spanish Armada. When he developed the objectivist epistemology that encompassed the first part of *Leviathan*, when he argued, contrary to all the ancients, that nature "dissociates," he did so, against the background of civil war, primarily to secure a rational foundation for politics so that such wars could be avoided in the future.

While Hobbes was brooding over the growing civil strife in England, Descartes was in winter quarters with the French army in Germany where the "fortune

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of war" had taken him. There he retreated alone into a stove-heated room "to look for the true method of attaining knowledge of everything [his] mind could grasp." Again, as we can see from the autobiographical account Descartes gives us in his seminal *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Directing One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences,* the quest for certain and secure foundations began, as it had with Hobbes, in part as a stay against the confusion and violence born of religious conflict.

Objectivism as the best alternative to violence: both Rorty and Palmer ignore this important truth about the epistemological tradition they criticize, though they do so for different reasons. Rorty ignores it because he is concerned only with the internal history of modern philosophy. Palmer ignores it because he believes that in order to account for the violent trajectory of objectivism, he must find exclusively egoistic motivation—idle curiosity and the desire for control—as the basic impetus behind it.

I do not mean to suggest that Rorty and Palmer ignore the virtues of the Enlightenment altogether, much less that either man is antagonistic to them. Indeed, as noted earlier, they both incorporate some elements of objectivism into their own prescriptions. Palmer, moreover, openly insists that we must not romanticize the life of "the earlier [pre-modern] world [which] was often little more than a reflection of the passions and prejudices of those who claimed to know." And Rorty states flatly that "the preservation of the values of the Enlightenment is our best hope."

But by ignoring or at least underestimating the extent to which objectivism's vices are precisely the defects of its virtues, both Rorty and Palmer are more sanguine than the historical record warrants in believing that one can persuasively disentangle the sinister strands of objectivism from its more humane strands within the academic conscience of the West. Any radical alternative to foundationalism or objectivism will seem to open up the prospect of renewed violence among different communities who would seem to have no *rational foundation* on the basis of which they might adjudicate the disagreements that will inevitably arise among them.

There may very well be a way successfully to assuage this fear of violence, and I think that Palmer at least has partially succeeded in doing so. But those who welcome the supersession of the epistemological question by the community question need to recognize how deep-seated and how historically well-founded are the fears of foundationalists who believe that if objectivism disappears, force, not some new epistemology, will take its place. This fear of tribalism and violence is perhaps the foremost difficulty that most communitarian accounts of knowledge must face.

III

Though I myself welcome the recent cultural ascendancy of the community question, I need to admit and then to face honestly three further difficulties that have attended this development before I can then proceed to demonstrate the need for the cultivation of certain religious virtues within communities of higher learning. These three difficulties should already be apparent from my brief account of Palmer and Rorty. First, the concept of community needs further specification. Second, the relationship between community on the one hand and knowledge and truth on the other hand needs further elucidation. Third, the communitarian impulse needs to be freed from hopelessly nostalgic yearnings. In the course of addressing these difficulties, I will anchor my discussion firmly within the actual experiences of common life within the present-day academy.

Much of the discussion of community today is marked by a degree of imprecision that borders on obscurity. Most parties to the discussion exhibit a terminological wavering of the sort that once characterized the discussion of culture among anthropologists. In the latter conversation, some thought of Culture (invariably with a capital C) as a unitary concept of an ideal and then proceeded to determine how much Culture any given group possessed. Others insisted that the topic could only be fruitfully pursued if one spoke of cultures, always in the lower-case plural and always designating empirical realities, to refer to all groups that shared a common language and a common past or identity. Still others oscillated between the grand ideal of Culture (variously described) and the actual diversity of groups, all of them cultures but possessing no discernible "essence" in common.

Conversation about community over the course of the last century has paralleled the conversation about culture. Thus, Dewey, one of the philosophers who has most influenced Rorty, sometimes spoke of publics or communities in the plural to refer to any group of people that recognizes itself as having some common problem or another. Under this description communities are kaleidoscopic, evanescent entities, assuming temporary shape and then dissolving once the problems that gave them their original purpose have disappeared or been resolved. On the other hand, Dewey spoke of the search for the "Great Community" or "Public," and these were terms that designated his special sense of democracy itself.

Rorty's own notions of community are much more obscure than Dewey's. He never actually uses "community" as a significant analytical category, but he constantly refers to collectivities of one sort or another in his effort to substantiate what he takes to be the only defensible understanding of knowledge (what is warrantably assertible by us) and truth (whatever is good for us to believe). Thus, he speaks of the subjective

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conditions of inquiry of any kind as "just the facts about what a given society, or profession, or other group, takes to be good ground for assertions of a certain sort." Rorty then refers to all of these collectivities as "disciplinary matrices." This bewildering parade of names indicates that the dialectics of Dewey (his movement back and forth between the ideal and the reality of community) has degenerated, in Rorty's hands at least, into sheer obscurantism.

Let me begin to demystify matters here by articulating some obvious truths. Academies are places of learning. Students and faculty come together because they seek knowledge and understanding. It may well be that many, perhaps most, students go to colleges and universities for other purposes; nevertheless, the two constitutive functions of academies are teaching and learning. These functions in turn include a variety of activities—reading, writing, computing, memorizing—that purport to advance disciplined thinking about important matters of human concern.

All disciplined thinking, even when it proceeds—as most of it does—in the solitary confines of the study, derives from and therefore depends upon social processes like language and tradition. Moreover, disciplined thought is itself often dialogical (involving two inner voices), more often conversational (involving many such voices). The eminent British philosopher of education, R. S. Peters, has put this latter and by now commonplace point as elegantly as anyone:

> Plato once described philosophy as the soul's dialogue with itself. It is a pity that this clue was not followed up. For the notion would not then have developed that reason is a sort of mental gadget that can be used by the individual or, as Hume described it, a "wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls." The ability to reason, in the philosophical sense of thinking critically about one's beliefs, develops only if a man keeps critical company so that a critic is incorporated in his own consciousness. The dialogue within is inseparable from the dialogue without.

This image of the individual disciplined thinker as engaged in a process that is in a derivative sense communal outlines some of the central and ideal features of *academic* community. First, this community is intentional in that it aims at knowledge and truth. Second, just as the voices within converse with one another in an intimate, critical, and engaging manner, so too must students and faculty treat one another with critical respect and concern. Like disciplined thought itself, community flourishes or perishes depending not only upon the critical acumen of the various voices that comprise it but also upon the extent to which and the manner in which they respect and listen to one another.

Of all the gatherings on a university campus, classroom meetings would seem most closely to approximate the ideal features of academic community just outlined. Like Dewey's emerging publics, these meetings arise around a set of questions or problems or subject matters. And they are surely evanescent. But unlike Dewey's publics, classroom meetings end not when a given problem has disappeared or been resolved but when a bell rings or a term concludes. Like the internal conversation that is disciplined thought, classroom meetings do aim at knowlege, truth, and understanding. But many, perhaps most, classroom meetings do not include much conversation, nor is there, for the most part, much intimacy and engagement among the several members of the group.

It therefore seems strained at best to speak of most classrooms as communities; perhaps they are best described, to borrow a term from Erving Goffman, as "focused gatherings." Yet they are nevertheless the single most important element in the overall assemblage of groups that constitutes the academic community, for the classroom is the place where students learn the disciplines and the virtues that are necessary to participate in a community of learning. In short, every teacher is teaching at least two things in every classroom—his or her subject and the manners of learning. I use the term "manners" here deliberately to capture both the sense of "methods" and the sense of "virtues."

Flourishing beyond the classrooms are a bewildering number of academic assemblies—faculty groups, sometimes defined along departmental lines, sometimes not; informal gatherings of students in residence halls and other locations; and any number of groups, comprised of both students and faculty, who congregate for the purpose of learning together. Faculty members are the most crucial element in this assemblage of groups, because they, more than the students, give shape and substance to the entire configuration of groups, because they are relatively more permanently rooted within any given academy, and because they are charged with the task of initiating the students into the discourses and the disciplines, the subjects and the manners of higher learning.

In brief, any academic community is itself an assemblage of groups that can be designated "communities," not because they possess a common essence but because they display a certain family resemblance to one another. Even so, there are some basic outlines that circumscribe academic communities: their face-to-face quality, their common pursuit of knowledge and understanding, and their integral character, the sense in which the quality of the individual's thought and the quality of the communities' thinking are mutually dependent upon one another. The excellence of "the dialogue within is inseparable from the

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[excellence of] the dialogue without."

When Parker Palmer claims that knowing is a "reunion of separated beings whose primary bond is not of logic but of love" or that knowledge is itself a form of responsible relationship, he intends, I think, to call attention to this integral character of the community of learning. When Rorty argues that "we understand knowledge when we understand the social justification of belief," he too means to emphasize the irreducibly communal dimension of thought. Even so, both Palmer and Rorty occasionally mystify and perplex readers who need greater clarity about the exact connections between community on the one hand and knowledge and truth on the other. I will therefore turn now to this second difficulty that has arisen recently in the context of the community question.

Academic community does not refer to some sort of metaphysical entity that is prior to the individuals comprising it and free from its own history and traditions. It is instead, as I have been suggesting, a configuration of plural communities with their own conventions, disciplinary histories, standards of evidence and argument, and patterns of discourse. So we need not conjure up, in thinking through the relationships among community, knowledge, and truth, assortments of alchemists or flat-earthers as plausible examples of communities of inquirers within the contemporary academy. Inquiry takes place within academic communities that are themselves embedded within an epistemic context, which context conditions in large part the justification of belief. To know something is just to hold beliefs about it that are justified. Justification of belief is itself a communal endeavor, the outcome, if you will, of disciplined inquiry.

Though communal inquiry secures knowledge through internal processes of justification, it does not insure truth. Inquiries can go wrong in many ways and for many reasons. Even so, as Jeffrey Stout has well said in *Ethics after Babel*, "truth is a property of interpreted sentences, and interpreted sentences belong to languages which are human creations. The world-as-it-is-in-itself is, by definition, the world apart from the application of interpreted sentences by human beings—the world described for epistemological purposes as undescribed. It therefore includes no truths. To accept or discover the truth about something is to have acquired a language in which interpreted sentences can be applied in a certain way. It is therefore to make use of human artifice, to possess certain habits, beliefs, and so on. That is the only road to truth about anything."

Academic communities are interpretive and self-critical. But though they aim at knowledge and truth, their capacity really to discover the truth about any matter will depend, as Stout here suggests, in part upon their possession of certain vocabularies, skills, and virtues. In other words, precision about truth and knowledge is itself contingent upon the understanding of the particular contexts within which these terms are used. For this reason, Parker Palmer is correct when he argues that community and truth are correlative terms.

In our present circumstances the clarification of the concept of academic community and the elucidation of knowledge and truth are therefore closely related enterprises. To ask about the meaning of truth is to raise questions about context, about the boundaries, the vocabulary, and the virtues that collectively define the shape and the substance of a particular community of inquirers whose primary intention is to discover the truth. Once the epistemological center of gravity has shifted to a place outside of the self, questions about communal ideals and questions about knowledge and truth are, though not identical to each other, ineluctably convergent.

Some contemporary thinkers, however, suspect all such references to communal ideals, regardless of whether these ideals are advanced within epistemological contexts, and this brings me to the third and final difficulty that attends current conversation about community. Michael Ignatieff, in his book *The Needs of Strangers*, has framed this last and fairly widespead critique of communal ideals as forcefully as anyone:

> Words like fraternity, belonging, and community are so soaked with nostalgia and utopianism that they are nearly useless as guides to the real possibilities of solidarity in modern society. Modern life has changed the possibilities of civic solidarity, and our language stumbles behind like an overburdened porter with a mountain of old cases. . . . Our task is to find a language for our need for belonging which is not just a way of expressing nostalgia, fear, and estrangement from modernity.

Jeffrey Stout has discerned some of these same nostalgic impulses at work among several communitarians, and on that basis he has suggested that many of them suffer from "terminal wistfulness." And Jeremy Waldron, who has himself been persuaded by Ignatieff's critique among others, has noted repeatedly that terms like "brotherhood" and "community" are now merely code words that timid or estranged souls use to protest modernity.

Though all three of these critics are speaking about civic life, their misgivings about community apply as well to my discussion of academic life in communitarian terms. Ignatieff continues his critique of communitarians with a question: "Our political images of civic belonging remain haunted by the classical polis, by Athens, Rome, and Florence. Is there a language of belonging adequate to Los Angeles?" I might well ask, given my present purposes, "Is there a language of community adequate to UCLA?"

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No and yes. No, because UCLA, along with any number of other large research-oriented universities, embodies in its practices and its language a Weberian conception of the academic vocation. And when Max Weber, in his famous address *Wissenschaft als Beruf*, sought to shape the self-understanding of the modern academy, he did so by insisting that the academic realm, like the political and economic realms, had become and would remain governed by means-end rationality and by impersonal constraints. Like Ignatieff, Weber believed that talk of friendship, community, and a sense of belonging was best consigned to private life. Up to a point, Weber and Ignatieff would surely be right: UCLA *as a whole* cannot be adequately analyzed by the language of community.

But matters are more complicated than this. One of UCLA's own faculty members has written a historical study of civic life in early modern Philadelphia that is directly germane to my own analysis of his and others' academic lives at UCLA. Gary B. Nash has noted that in pre-Revolutionary days, Philadelphia was in some sense a single community. But over time its population increased, its class divisions became more pronounced, its ethnic composition became more diverse, its neighborhoods changed their configurations, and its economic system became more geared to the impersonality of the marketplace. Unlike some historians who, in view of these developments, proclaim the loss of community in Philadelphia, Nash argues for another analytical strategy. "Rather than nostalgically tracing the eclipse of community," he writes, "we need to trace the continuously evolving process of community." Nash then proceeds to write about craft organizations, working-class taverns, benevolent societies, free black churches, and reform associations. Instead of dismissing these structured organizations as mere *Gesellschaften*, Nash assigns to them a leading role in the creation of genuine urban community, of what he calls "*Gemeinschaft* of mind—the mental life of community."

Although analogies drawn between civic and academic life are far from perfect, I would insist that something like Nash's analysis of Philadelphia better captures the fabric of his and others' academic lives at UCLA than does the language of *Gesellschaft*. UCLA is simply less than the sum of its parts. Its intellectual vitality arises not at the level of the university as a whole but from the myriad of communities whose assemblage we designate UCLA. And these communities are marked in turn by features I have already outlined as circumscribing the family of communities that constitutes any college or university—face-to-face engagement, aspirations to knowledge and truth, and integral relationships between individual thought and communal conversation.

Neither the language of *Gesellschaft* nor the language of *Gemeinschaft* can adequately describe the modern academy. The two vocabularies arose initially, in the writings of Ferdinand Tonnies, in a kind of dialectical opposition to one another. Indeed, it would be a subtle historical task to determine whether the language of community arose as a protest against modernity or whether the language of modernity arose as a protest against what were taken to be the utopian impulses behind the language of community. At any rate, Tonnies, who first coined the word "*Gemeinschaft*" as a sociological category, used the term in both a descriptive and a critical sense. "His images of *Gemeinschaft*," Harry Liebersohn has shown, "were not an inducement to nostalgia so much as a powerful reminder of things that once had been and could return."

To criticize communitarian thought *simply* because it deploys images drawn from a real or imagined past as criticism of the present is to dismiss arbitrarily much of modern social and political theory. Are we simply to disregard Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* because of his invocation of a state of nature and a subsequent state of nascent civil society? Are we to dismiss Thomas Paine because he takes us back to Eden on the road to establishing the rights of man? If thinkers as diverse as Rousseau, Paine, and Tonnies are all to be understood as utopian insofar as they criticize the present from the standpoint of a real or imagined past, then utopianism is an honored mode of cultural criticism.

IV

Communitarian accounts of knowledge and truth have been vulnerable to charges of tribalism, imprecision, and nostalgia in part because communitarians have been insufficiently attentive to the affections and the virtues that sustain disciplined communal conversation. So, for example, even though Rorty does not think of himself as a communitarian, he repeatedly insists that we must focus upon the "social justification of belief" if we are first to understand and then to pursue knowledge and truth. Yet Rorty's understanding of communal processes is weak in part because he lacks a spiritual tradition within which he can articulate it. By contrast to Rorty, Parker Palmer is quite lucid on the subject of community precisely because he, unlike Rorty, is rooted in a spiritual tradition. And unlike many of his fellow communitarians, Palmer consistently connects his analyses of knowledge and community to his understanding of character, to what in his terms might be called spiritually grounded habits of mind.

Indeed, I shall venture further than Palmer to suggest that the practice of certain spiritual virtues is and always has been essential to processes of higher learning, even within the secular academy. I have tried thus far to demonstrate that the secular part of Western culture has itself raised the community question with unprecedented urgency and that the religious are best

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situated to address the question with authority based upon both tradition and experience. Here, however, I wish only to make a more restricted suggestion regarding the relationship between religion and communities of higher learning. I believe that the most promising argument for an integral relationship between them can be made through a demonstration that genuine learning has always entailed the exercise of virtues that arose initially within communities that were self-consciously religious in character. I want now briefly to consider three such virtues—humility, faith, and self-denial—and to show how each one of them is arguably indispensable to the process of genuine learning.

Much of what passes for laziness or the proverbial "lack of motivation" among today's students really involves a lack of humility, stemming in part from a lack of piety or respect for that aspect of God's ongoing creation that manifests itself in works of genius. During the last term, I asked my students why they had not thought through a particular passage from St. Augustine on friendship and loss. I knew, because I had by that time grown to know these students very well, that they cared very much about the matters that Augustine was examining. I had not realized, however, that some of my students were easily convinced, based upon a quick reading of the text, that Augustine was simply mistaken or overly agitated about these matters. Others complained that Augustine was unnecessarily obscure. All of them dismissed the passage in a peremptory fashion.

Current educational theory would suggest, in the face of these student comments, that I had failed properly to motivate them to want to learn about friendship and loss or that I had not managed to make Augustine accessible to them. I *had* probably failed in these ways. But my students could have overcome my failings had they been sufficiently humble, had they presumed that Augustine's apparent obscurity was *their* problem, not his, and had they presumed that his apparent inconsistencies or excesses were not really the careless errors they took them to be.

Humility on this account does not mean uncritical acceptance: it means, in practical terms, the *presumption* of wisdom and authority in the author. My students are far too often ready to believe that Kant was just, in a given passage, murky or that Aristotle was pointlessly repetitive or that Tolstoy was, in the battle scenes of *War and Peace*, needlessly verbose. Such quick, easy, and dismissive appraisals preclude the possibility of learning from these writers. Yes, some of these judgments might turn out to be warranted, but the practice of humility at least prevents them from being made summarily. *Some* degree of humility is a precondition for learning.

As is faith. James Gustafson has recently argued that "if the university is to be a fruitful location for exploring larger issues of life, perhaps we need to acknowledge, each of us as scholars, teachers, and students, that all our knowing involves 'faith,' human confidence in what we have received." The point seems indisputable. We all rely upon the work and the thought of others, and we cannot possibly think well in an atmosphere of mistrust. Again, as in the case of humility, trusting the research and the theories of others does not mean uncritical acceptance. It means, as Gustafson has said, that we typically believe what we are questioning and at the same time question what we are believing. Faith then is a persistent beat in the rhythm of intellectual life. Without it, we would not be able to learn. All of us in some sense or another really do believe in order to understand.

Finally, and perhaps fundamentally, the virtue of self-denial is indispensable to learning. By self-denial I mean the capacity first to risk and then to give ourselves up if necessary for the sake of the truth. The Italian Renaissance philosopher Pico della Mirandola argued that the conflicts that arise within a community of inquiry are "peculiar in that here it is a gain to lose. Consequently, anyone very weak can and should not only not disparage them [the struggles], but also seek them voluntarily, since the loser truly receives benefit and not injury from the winner, for through him the loser returns home richer. . . ." I would prefer to say that truth is always the victor in these struggles. All participants lose, in the sense that they all surrender a part of themselves in the process of growing into the truth together.

Humility, faith, and self-denial: these practices neither exhaust the list of spiritual virtues that are indispensable to learning nor do they represent a list of *distinctively* Christian virtues. Indeed, the virtues I have touched upon here did not originate from the example of Jesus of Nazareth. They arose instead from the practices and the teachings of the ancient Hebrews, a people whose deep and widely celebrated commitment to learning was and still is informed by an epistemology that is profoundly communal in character. To say, with Parker Palmer, that we must "recover from our spiritual tradition the models and methods of knowing as an act of love" is to direct us to the roots of that tradition in ancient Israel for whom knowledge and intimacy were one and the same thing.

Nor should we limit our understanding of religious virtues to the Judeo-Christian strand of the Western tradition. Plato, whose academy, Josef Pieper reminds us, regularly performed religious sacrifices, understood very well the integral relationship between virtue and knowledge, character and learning. He chose the dialogue form, I believe, because it was *the* vehicle best designed to dramatize the movement of inquiry as an act of life, involving characters in conversation, not intellects in isolation. The *Meno*, Plato's only dialogue on the subject of education, features a title character whose failures to learn are more frequently

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the results of flaws in his character than they are the results of lapses in his logic. Meno needs to change if he is to come to know the truth, and insofar as the truth comes to Meno, he does change, not just his ideas but his way of living.

Indeed, whether we look to the teachers of ancient Israel or to the Platonic academy or to Augustine at Cassiciacum or to the medieval university or to Pico's disputatious Florence or to the small colleges of early nineteenth-century America, we find learning flourishing in communities formed by the conscious practice of spiritual virtues. Over the course of the last century, the modern university has ceased to attend to character formation, or it has imagined that such attention should be an "extra-curricular" enterprise having little or nothing to do with knowledge. From this perspective, the current ascendancy of the community question may be Western culture's way of awakening from a comparatively brief slumber induced or at least maintained by objectivism. If so, the "problem" is not to explain, much less to justify, the relationship between religion and higher learning. The "problem" is to account for how we could ever have lost sight of it.

This blindness to the relationship between spirituality and learning has been in part the fault of the "enlightened" secular establishment and in part the fault of religious bigotry and obscurantism. David Hume insisted that some of the very virtues I have just discussed are inimical to learning. He understood very well that the Christian religion was not merely a set of teachings but a way of life. And in his *Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* he insisted that "monkish" virtues like humility and self-sacrifice "stupefy the understanding and harden the heart, obscure the fancy and sour the temper." For all of its remarkable achievements, the enlightenment rationalism of Hume and others always had the potential to corrode the very virtues that made enlightened inquiry possible.

On the other hand, the religious bigotry and superstition that Hume assailed so mercilessly have persisted long after his critiques of them. At the very moment at the end of the nineteenth century that the universities were consolidating the triumph of objectivism, many of the religious were claiming that religion meant dogmatism based upon a peculiar reading of the Scriptures (Genesis as a geology text, for example). If the current ascendancy of the community question really does mark something of a rediscovery, we might expect that the religious will rediscover the ethical dimension of their spirituality at the same time that the academicians rediscover the spiritual dimension of their ethos.

To speak in such abstract and exalted terms is to engage the language of hope, not optimism. For it is one thing to suggest that the life of learning will always be in some sense dependent upon the exercise of spiritual virtues in however attenuated a form, quite another to imagine that the universities will turn to the practice of those spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, that give such virtues meaning and strength. I do not therefore expect any grand restructuring of academe in the near future, and I would myself shrink back from participating in such a venture. Again, I think that Palmer is correct. He argues that the place to begin to counter the objectivist epistemology that still grips the academy is in individual classrooms where teachers, disciplining themselves first, create spaces "where obedience to truth is practiced."

I also agree with Palmer that the state of relatedness or wholeness that was present "in the beginning" constitutes the horizon of our hopes. But I read Genesis a bit differently from him, and I am therefore less sanguine than he is about the penultimate prospects of our knowledge under any description, even the description of knowing as an act of love. I noted earlier the ironic and paradoxical fact that the violent trajectory of objectivism was impelled in part by the desire for civil peace. I believe that Genesis teaches us that all human knowing is paradoxical in character, paradoxical because limited, limited because human.

Indeed, the first disobedience involves something like a "fall" into humanity. Mortality and self-consciousness (in the double sense of self-awareness and embarrassment) emerge from the knowledge of good and evil. And the sources of the most profound human achievements seem thereafter bound up inextricably with the sources of human shame and misery. Since this is so, the ultimate grounds for our hope must lie somewhere beyond ourselves and our knowing. Perhaps the pivotal point of relation between higher learning and religion lies somewhere between the deepest human sense of the limits of our knowing and the cultivation, in the midst of such chastening wisdom, of the spiritual virtue of hope. FT

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The Orthodox Jew as Intellectual Crank

David Singer

My subject is "The Orthodox Jew as Intellectual Crank," and it would be best if I began with some definitions. My dictionary defines a crank as an "ill-tempered, grouchy person," as an "eccentric person who is overzealous in his advocacy of a private cause." By these standards, Baruch Kurzweil and Yeshayahu Leibowitz, two Israeli Orthodox thinkers, certainly merit the label "crank." Both men—Kurzweil died a suicide at age 65 in 1972, while Leibowitz is still active at age 87—have well-deserved reputations as intellectual wild men, as ferocious polemicists, no-holds-barred critics, and fevered champions of the unconventional and the outrageous. Is there a reader even slightly familiar with the writings of Kurzweil and Leibowitz who would not recognize "ill-tempered," "eccentric," and "overzealous" as suitable descriptive terms for these men?

The question I want to raise is this: Is the crank element—what I shall hereafter refer to as "crankitude"—that manifests itself in the work of Kurzweil and Leibowitz merely a reflection of personal idiosyncrasy or does it point to something more significant? To be sure, the personal element is there: Kurzweil and Leibowitz come by their crankitude honestly and naturally. At the same time, one cannot help but notice that being a crank helps them to function more effectively as Orthodox thinkers—crankitude provides them with nothing less than a full-fledged intellectual stance. In short, my thesis is that Kurzweil and Leibowitz have elevated personal idiosyncrasy into a stylized cultural response—a response that permits them, at once, to take modernity with full seriousness, but also to reject modernity in the name of Jewish faith. The excesses that one associates with these men—excesses of style, of rhetoric, and of substance—all play a part in this process. Kurzweil and Leibowitz are not Orthodox intellectuals who just happen to be cranks; rather, they are full-fledged "Orthodox intellectual cranks"—i.e., crankitude goes to the very heart of their enterprise as Orthodox thinkers.

To better appreciate the nature of the enterprise that Kurzweil and Leibowitz engage in as Orthodox intellectual cranks it would be useful to consider the categories employed by sociologist Peter Berger, the leading academic analyst of the modernization process. Berger argues that religious thinkers have available essentially three types of response to the challenge of modernity: "cognitive retrenchment," "cognitive bargaining," and "cognitive surrender." Cognitive retrenchment is the sectarian option, calling for a conscious rejection of modernity as a dangerous heresy. The thinker taking this position in effect states, as Berger puts it: "The rest of you go climb a tree; we believe this, we know this, and we are going to stick to it. And if this is irrelevant to the rest of you, well, that is just too bad." In cognitive bargaining, in contrast, "there are two conflicting views of the world and they start to negotiate with each other"; an "attempt is made to arrive at a cognitive compromise." Finally, there is cognitive surrender, in which, in Berger's terms, "one simply accepts the fact that the majority is right, then adapts oneself to that point of view."

Most Orthodox thinkers operating in a modern framework—a tradition stretching from Samson Raphael Hirsch in the early nineteenth century to David Hartman in the late twentieth century—have

DAVID SINGER *is Director of Research for the American Jewish Committee and Editor of the* American Jewish Year Book.

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engaged in one form or another of cognitive bargaining. In sharp contrast, Kurzweil and Leibowitz offer us the model of Orthodox intellectuals managing to combine—in equal measure no less—cognitive surrender and cognitive retrenchment. This, to put it mildly, is an astonishing intellectual feat, and crankitude is the form of its expression. Kurzweil and Leibowitz, at one and the same time, embrace and reject modernity. They exhibit, on the one hand, a radical openness to key aspects of the modern experience, and, on the other, a radical rejection of basic tendencies of modernity. Moreover, all this is carried out in the name of a radicalized version of Orthodox faith, a version that presents itself as the one true way. Small wonder then that Kurzweil and Leibowitz come across as intellectual wild men, that their work is characterized by high-voltage tension and extreme formulations. Such are the pressures—personal and psychological, no less so than abstractly intellectual—that come to bear on the Orthodox intellectual crank.

Rather than embarking on an extended discussion of what Kurzweil and Leibowitz have to say, I want to put forward a limited series of propositions that relate to their work in its typological aspects. After all, it is the Orthodox intellectual crank as a type that engages our attention. First, however, some biographical and bibliographical notes are in order.

Kurzweil and Leibowitz belong to the same generation—the former was born in Pirnice, Moravia, in 1907 and the latter in Riga, Russia, in 1903—and emigrated to Palestine during the same period—Kurzweil in 1939 and Leibowitz in 1935. They differ sharply, however, in their fields of scholarly pursuit and the trajectories of their careers. Kurzweil was the very model of the Central European intellectual, specializing in the study of literature, aesthetics, and philosophy at the University of Frankfurt. While he eventually attained the post of professor of Hebrew literature at Bar-Ilan University and wrote a regular column for *Haaretz*, he remained a permanent outsider to the Israeli intellectual establishment. Leibowitz, in contrast, was oriented toward the sciences, studying chemistry and medicine, although he also showed a strong interest in philosophy. Upon settling in Palestine, he became associated with the Hebrew University—an institution that Kurzweil detested—first as a professor of organic and biochemistry and neurophysiology, and later as a professor of the history and philosophy of science. Leibowitz's extreme dovishness with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as his harsh attacks on institutionalized Orthodoxy—the latter element also appears in Kurzweil's writings—have made him something of a darling to many secular Israeli intellectuals.

On the bibliographical side, it is important to note that only a very small sampling of the writings of Kurzweil and Leibowitz are available outside the Hebrew language. This fact underscores the point that the work of these two Orthodox thinkers, in its origin—though certainly not in its reach—is inseparable from the Israeli context. Indeed, until quite recently, Kurzweil and Leibowitz were virtually unknown beyond the borders of Israel. This has begun to change, however, with the appearance of James Diamond's very fine English-language study *Baruch Kurzweil and Modern Hebrew Literature* and David Hartman's English-language writings on Leibowitz. Within Israel itself, of course, both men have received considerable scholarly attention. The secondary literature on Kurzweil, including *The Baruch Kurzweil Volume*, a series of memorial essays, is quite massive, while that on Leibowitz—including *The Yeshayahu Leibowitz Volume*, a *festschrift*, and *Negation for Negation's Sake*, an anti-*festschrift*—is also substantial.

Let us now get down to cases by describing some of the key typological features of the Orthodox intellectual crank.

Proposition 1: The Orthodox intellectual crank centers his work on a religious problematic defined in rigidly either/or terms.

In Kurzweil's case, this problematic is the absolute gulf separating the world of pre-modern religious faith from the secular outlook of modernity. For Kurzweil, modern and secular are synonymous, and it is the rise of secularization that has made modernity an age of permanent crisis. The starting point of Kurzweil's thinking is the assumption, as Diamond puts it, that the "only absolute in human life, human history, and human culture is faith in the living transcendent God." In the absence of faith—which is what secular modernity has brought about—human existence loses its one sure anchor, opening itself to what Kurzweil variously calls the "void," the "absurd," and the "demonic." (These are key terms in his lexicon.) The meaning of this change, as Kurzweil sees it, is described by Diamond in the following manner:

> In this new setting man is thrust into a cosmos bereft of certainty. He lives now not in the presence of God but of the abyss, of Nothing. The individual ego becomes the center and gradually enlarges to fill the void. Man for the first time conceives of himself as an autonomous being who is self-sufficient. There is no transcendent source for values and morality, nothing to hold in check man's instinctive capacity for self-aggrandizement, *hubris*, domination and destruction. . . . Now man is utterly alone, beyond all values and all relationships with society or his fellow-men—yet he is unsatisfied. He has lost his soul but failed to gain the world, for the demons are insatiable.

A key element in Kurzweil's thinking is the notion of "late return," which occurs when an individual, caught in the web of modernity, seeks to escape his

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situation by turning back to a life of pristine faith. It is just here, however, that the either/or element comes to the fore, in that Kurzweil takes it for granted that no such return is possible for the vast majority of moderns. Kurzweil is not an evangelist calling for the restoration of religious faith; rather, he is a diagnostician of secular unbelief, describing what he takes to be the permanent condition of modern man. If Kurzweil devoted his career to the study of modern literature, it was because he saw it as offering telling testimony to this very condition. And the chief testifier, of course, was modern Hebrew literature.

Kurzweil's interpretation of modern Hebrew literature is clearly set forth in *Our Modern Literature: Continuity or Revolt?* In this work, now a classic in the field, he argues decisively for the latter position. The emphasis here is on radical discontinuity, on modern Hebrew literature as a product of secularization and the collapse of religious faith. Kurzweil states: "The secularism of modern Hebrew literature is a given in that it is for the most part the outgrowth of a spiritual world divested of the primordial certainty in a sacral foundation that envelops all the events of life and measures their value." Kurzweil mocks those who fail to see the "difference between the sacral world of traditional Judaism, in which the Divine Torah structures the totality of life activities, and a world which has become secularized in its totality but still preserves individual corners of interest in religious elements and subjects." The former—the "sacral world of traditional Judaism"—is the domain of the "vision," while the latter—a "world which has become secularized in its totality"—is the place of the "void." Modern Hebrew writers, in Kurzweil's view, sort themselves out most fundamentally by their varying responses to the confrontation with the "void."

In Leibowitz's case, the religious problematic is the radical disjuncture between theocentric and anthropocentric conceptions of religion; between religion as the service of God for its own sake and religion as an instrument for the satisfaction of human needs. Eliezer Schweid has shrewdly labeled Leibowitz's position "neo-neo-Orthodoxy," in that Leibowitz "frees Judaism of every tie . . . to human culture." Leibowitz's key claim, Warren Harvey indicates, is that "in Judaism, questions of ethics, politics, science, or history have *no value whatsoever* except insofar as they might be means to the service of God in accordance with the Torah and the commandments, that is, in accordance with the Halakhah." Leibowitz himself states the matter as follows:

> Every reason given for the *mitzvot* which bases itself on human needs from any consideration of the concept need, whether intellectual, ethical, social, national—voids the *mitzvot* from every religious meaning. If they are meant to benefit society or if they maintain the Jewish people, then he who performs them does not serve God but himself or society or his people. In any case, he does not serve God but uses the Torah of God for his benefit and as a means to satisfy his needs. The reason for the *mitzvot* is the worship of God.

Amazingly enough, Leibowitz consistently invokes the name of Maimonides in putting forward this radically anti-humanistic conception of religion. A more appropriate model here—although Leibowitz would vehemently deny it—is Soren Kierkegaard, whose influence can be felt on virtually every page of Leibowitz's writings. (Kierkegaard, incidentally, knew a thing or two about being an intellectual crank!) Is it a mere coincidence that Leibowitz points to the *Akedah*, to Abraham on Mount Moriah, as a paradigm of how man must stand before God? He states: "Christianity's highest symbol is the crucifixion, and sacrifice which God brings for man, whereas the highest symbol of faith in Judaism is the *Akedah* where all man's values are canceled and cast aside for reverence and love for God." So powerful is the image of the *Akedah* for Leibowitz that he actually employs it to describe his intellectual hero, calling Maimonides "Abrahamic man." He observes:

> In Maimonides, more than in any other Jewish figure, there appears the image of the first Jew facing the crisis of the *Akedah* where all human thought, human feeling, and values are completely obliterated before the fear and love of God. This Abrahamic sense was alive in Maimonides. . . .
>
> The God of Maimonides is not . . . [a] functionary for the human group serving as a cosmic minister of health, law, police, and economics. Only for a God who is "true being" and not a provider of man's needs does it befit man to take "the fire and the knife" in hand and go uncomplainingly "to the place of which God spoke to him" and sacrifice his only son, thereby relinquishing both his human aspirations and all hope for the future. . . .

Proposition 2: The Orthodox intellectual crank displays radical openness to key aspects of the modern experience.

In Kurzweil's case, this is the openness he shows to modern literary expression in all its forms. Far from spurning modern writing as the illicit fruit of the secularization process, Kurzweil lavishes endless attention on it, producing a body of literary criticism that is nothing short of massive. More importantly, it is also first-rate. Kurzweil's critics are legion, but even the severest of them would have to admit that he was the very model of the engaged literary scholar. Thus Diamond—who personally is quite sympathetic to Kurzweil—points to the "marvelous coherence and consistency" of Kurzweil's method, to the "passion

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and the struggle with which he carried out the critical enterprise." Stanley Nash, in a review of Diamond's book, maintains that Kurzweil "brought a rhetorical intensity and intellectual acumen to Hebrew criticism that have rarely been equaled."

Consider, then, the strange phenomenon of an Orthodox intellectual identifying the realm of heresy and then settling in for the lifelong study of it. A study, moreover, carried out in loving detail and with a considerable amount of imaginative sympathy for the heretics. That certainly is what Kurzweil offers us in his literary criticism, which yielded brilliant analyses of the work of, among others, Bialik, Brenner, Tchernichovsky, Greenberg, and, of course, Agnon. All that Kurzweil asks of his writers is that they testify honestly to the confrontation with the "void" and the "demonic"—wherever that takes them. What he could not abide, however, were attempts at evasion, such as he saw in the younger generation of Israeli writers. Kurzweil took it upon himself—as if he needed any prodding!—to expose their "snobby immaturity and inflated nothingness." With a straight face, he declared Amos Oz's *My Michael* to be more dangerous to Israel as a nation than all the Arab armies.

In Leibowitz's case, the openness shows itself in everything associated with the scientific realm—most especially the natural sciences, but social science and history as well. Eliezer Goldman, in an article entitled "Responses to Modernity in Orthodox Jewish Thought," uses the words "radical acceptance" to describe Leibowitz's stance in this regard. Radical it certainly is, in that Leibowitz fully endorses the empiricist descriptions of reality. Goldman summarizes Leibowitz's position as follows:

> Leibowitz's conception of science is thoroughly empirical. However much of our knowledge may be imported into it by our intellectual schemes, the final arbiter in all questions of fact is our experience, and this is forced upon us. . . . The world picture we all really accept when we do not delude ourselves is "secular." . . . This applies not only to nature, but to human history in its factuality.

It is important to note that Leibowitz extends this line of analysis even to the study of the Bible, thus supporting the findings of modern critical scholarship. Leibowitz, David Hartman observes, regards the Bible not "as a source of factual information, but only as a source of normative direction—that is, as Torah and *mitzvah*."

What is remarkable about Leibowitz's embrace of the modern scientific outlook is that it is organically linked to his anti-humanistic conception of Judaism. From the religious standpoint, Leibowitz wishes to divorce the service of God from all other facets of the human endeavor. From the secular standpoint, however, this very divorce frees him to accept the world of science on its own (empiricist) terms. Declaring nature and history to be absolutely irrelevant to the religious quest, Leibowitz can approach them in a thoroughly modern manner. This is of no small importance to an Orthodox Jew who functioned as a serious research scientist long before he emerged publicly as a religious thinker. Leibowitz, quite clearly, has hit upon a marvelous formula for reducing cognitive dissonance. Is that not one important consequence of Leibowitz's position, as outlined by Hartman?

> Leibowitz . . . make[s] the important claim that religious language is totally prescriptive. . . . All of Judaism can be translated into a way-of-life language that does not require any theological metaphysical claims about the nature of God and the way He acts in history. Whereas empirical descriptions have to be confirmed or falsified by the canons of scientific and logical thought, God-talk cannot be made intelligible outside of the normative language of the *mitzvot*. Halakhic Jews, therefore, should not look to nature or history in their religious quest. That quest is fully exhausted in their participation in the framework of the *halakhah*.

Proposition 3: Despite his receptivity to key aspects of modernity, the Orthodox intellectual crank's ultimate allegiance is to a version of Orthodox Judaism that negates the basic thrust of the modern experience.

In Kurzweil's case, this is the metahistorical vision of Jewish history advanced by Samson Raphael Hirsch and his grandson Isaac Breuer. Kurzweil first befriended Breuer during his years in Frankfurt, when, in addition to attending the university there, he enrolled in the yeshivah that Hirsch had founded in the nineteenth century. It was Hirsch, of course, who provided Kurzweil the model of an Orthodox Jew who is meticulous in religious observance, but also open to secular culture in its various forms. Breuer affirmed this model as well, but more importantly, he taught Kurzweil to oppose all attempts at the secularization of Jewish life. When Kurzweil argued that "Jewish existence without God is the Absurd with a capital 'A,' " he was directly echoing Breuer. More generally, Kurzweil followed the Hirsch-Breuer school in regarding Judaism and the Jewish people as metahistorical realities. In this view, Diamond explains, the Torah is "God-given, a timeless absolute that transcends the limitations of human history. The Jews, therefore, exist for the sake of Judaism; Judaism does not exist for the sake of the Jews." "Kurzweil's commitment to a metahistorical fideism," Diamond rightly concludes, "is antipodal to the perspective [of] most Hebrew literature in the twentieth century."

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It is precisely here that Kurzweil's famous attacks on Ahad Haam and Gershom Scholem come into the picture. Kurzweil saw these two "arch culprits" aiming at a secularization of Jewish life, an enterprise he saw as nothing short of "demonic." To struggle within the world of the "void," as did modern Hebrew writers, was one thing; to establish the "void" as the new foundation for a Jewish life, as did Ahad Haam and Scholem, quite another. Against this tendency, Kurzweil was unsparing in his criticism, referring to the "palpable absurdities of the Ahad Haamist philosophy." This was child's play, however, compared to his polemic against Scholem, whose sins, in Kurzweil's view, were threefold. First, he employed historicism as a tool to relativize the Judaic absolute. Second, he assigned "demonic" mysticism a position of importance in the framework of normative Judaism. Third, and most important, he legitimated secular Zionism as an expression native to Jewish history. "There is no more penetrating proof of the absurdity of our time," Kurzweil railed, "than the fact that Scholem is today the spokesman for Judaism."

Leibowitz, as indicated above, sees himself as a disciple of Maimonides in advancing his anti-humanistic conception of Judaism; indeed, he claims to be doing nothing more than laying bare Maimonides' esoteric teaching in the *Guide* and elsewhere. The key point, however, is that Leibowitz wishes to make this teaching fully exoteric, believing that this is a vital necessity in the modern context. Why is this so? Harvey explains Leibowitz's thinking on the matter as follows:

> Leibowitz is convinced . . . that it is foolish to try to advance religion by pointing to its utility in satisfying human needs when these needs are in fact presently being satisfied quite well *without* religion. To teach religion today as a means . . . is to teach that it is *superfluous*. . . . He consequently insists that today Judaism must be taught unequivocally as the service of God out of love. . . . In every age . . . the true service of God entails rebellion against utilitarianism and anthropocentrism, but today it is additionally a rebellion against the reigning secularist values of society.

In calling for "rebellion" in the modern situation, Leibowitz intends nothing less than the absolute rejection of modernity's key operative assumption: man as the center of value.

Proposition 4: Crankitude is a coping mechanism that enables the Orthodox intellectual crank to maintain a reasonable equilibrium in a situation of extreme stress.

From everything that I have said thus far about Kurzweil and Leibowitz it should be evident that theirs is not a placid synthesis of Orthodoxy and modernity *à la* Samson Raphael Hirsch. On the contrary, their encounter with modernity is characterized by sharply conflicted feelings, by powerful attraction on the one side and violent rejection on the other. The crucial factor here is the element of simultaneity—the fact that Kurzweil and Leibowitz feel drawn to and repulsed by modernity at one and the same time. It is no exaggeration at all to state that the measure of their attraction is the measure of their repulsion, and vice versa. It is precisely this tension that makes the work of these two Orthodox intellectuals so fascinating, and, I would contend, that accounts for their crankitude.

Crankitude, in short, is a coping mechanism, a tool for handling the severe pressures that result from a sharply conflicted response to modernity. Given what Kurzweil and Leibowitz wish to affirm and negate in the very same breath, is it any wonder that their writings are characterized by excess—by extreme formulations, by overheated language, and, let us add, by patently absurd claims? If they denounce their intellectual adversaries in the harshest of terms, can we not see in this a desperate attempt to beat back the enemy that lurks within—within, that is, Kurzweil and Leibowitz themselves? And if they insist on confronting modern Jews at every turn with either/or decisions, is it not because they themselves, at the most fundamental level, are forever unable to decide? To be a crank is a relatively simple matter; to be an Orthodox intellectual crank is a much more complicated undertaking. FT

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Review Essay

Solzhenitsyn and Modern Literature

M. D. Aeschliman

"For the advanced writer of our time," Diana Trilling wrote twenty-five years ago in "The Moral Radicalism of Norman Mailer," "the self is his supreme, even sole referent." The specifically American literary history of this immoralism, moral anarchism, or relativization has been remarked or traced by a number of our finest literary critics, including F. O. Matthiessen, Mark Van Doren, and Quentin Anderson, whose 1971 book on the subject bore the revealing title *The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literary and Cultural History.*

Yet even thirty years before Matthiessen had worried about the egotism and solipsism of our "Transcendentalists"—Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman—deploring their romantic "nineteenth-century belief in every man as his own Messiah." Also in the 1940s, Van Doren pointed out Hawthorne's mistrust of these self-absorbed romantics, with their "arrogance of spirit"; Hawthorne "merely knew," in Van Doren's words, that they were "wrong when [they] said with Emerson that self-reliance is a sufficient virtue comprehending all other virtues." Of Emerson's self-deification, Anderson wrote: "For all such endeavors Hawthorne's contempt and loathing is obvious. The plurality of our obligations . . . and the demand that we love our neighbors as ourselves were inescapable for him." And of Whitman, who first sang the "Song of Myself" that is noisily and endlessly with us everywhere now, Anderson wrote that Whitman was attacking the traditional "consciousness which characterizes Western man"; he was engaged in "a rejection of Christianity in behalf of an emotional egalitarianism" which entailed "a rejection of the idea that the self was internally structured by conscience"—i.e., that we are *moral* beings. Given this transcendental egotism and romantic self-absorption, life takes on the nature of an "aesthetic phenomenon" that is "beyond good and evil."

The link with European atheistic, existential aestheticism is clear, and it was Jorge Luis Borges who pointed it out very succinctly: "Nietzsche wrote that he felt himself so close to Emerson that he did not dare praise him because it would have been like praising himself." But if Nietzsche is the most eloquent and obvious evangelist of self-deification and immoralism and aestheticism, he was only one of the many nineteenth- and twentieth-century atheistic "masters of suspicion," grandchildren of the *philosophes*, who saw the "death of God" as the means of human "liberation," however differently conceived or defined. "Honor, power, wealth, fame, and the love of women—the aims of life," wrote Freud; and the aristocratic Nietzschean contempt that he meant by "honor" might be detected in his remark to the Rev. Oskar Pfister: "I have found little that is 'good' about human beings on the whole. In my experience most of them are trash, no matter whether they publicly subscribe to this or that ethical doctrine or none at all."

But an even more powerful psychologist, and a great perennial adversary of atheism and immoralism, is Dostoevsky. He understood, and profoundly and unforgettably depicts, the atheistic self "beyond good and evil," who oscillates, like Nietzsche, between joy and despair at his liberation from ethics. With insight so profound as to be foresight, the prophet Dostoevsky foresaw with uncanny accuracy the modern consequences of the "drama of atheist humanism." Thus Mussolini and Hitler drank at Nietzsche's well, and the brilliantly feckless Marxist/Existentialist J.-P. Sartre wrote that "man is the being whose project is to be God" and that "human effort is the pure effort to become God."

A century after the death of Marx and the passing of Nietzsche's sanity, their atheistic liberation programs have left a world littered with corpses, slaves, and simple or sophisticated immoralists. At the conclusion of his great historical study *Main Currents of Marxism*, the ex-Marxist Leszek Kolakowski wrote: "The self-deification of mankind to which Marxism gave philosophical expression has ended the same way as all such attempts, whether individual or collective: it has revealed itself as a fatal aspect of human bondage."

The greatest contemporary witness to and scourge of this bondage is an heir of Dostoevsky, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, a writer who speaks with an authority, eloquence, and moral depth that properly locates and situates for us the *real* "worth" of highly praised moral mudlarks and "imperial selves" such as Mailer, Henry Miller, Allen Ginsberg, W. S. Burroughs, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Yet ever since his 1978 Harvard Commencement Address, Solzhenitsyn has been less and less welcome in the West. His message, repeated

M. D. Aeschliman *is Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Virginia and author of* The Restitution of Man: C. S. Lewis and the Case Against Scientism.

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in interviews and his 1983 Templeton Address, is that "Godlessness [is] the first step to the Gulag" and also to the death of common civilized decency in the West. Solzhenitsyn's theistic views have grown more and more obnoxious to the morally "liberated" intelligentsia who control the major American communications media. Yet he is far from alone in his assessment that a post-theistic world is inevitably a post-moral and post-human one. The same analysis was made by G. K. Chesterton, T. S. Eliot, C. S. Lewis, Malcolm Muggeridge, Flannery O'Connor, and a host of other major writers.

But the Eastern Europeans have been the most eloquent in their recovery of the theistic vision in the late twentieth century, and many of them are explicit disciples or heirs of Dostoevsky and of the theologians, philosophers, and critics who have studied and praised him, from Nicholas Berdyaev to Mikhail Bakhtin. In the 1982 edition of Trevor Beeson's book on "religious conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe," *Discretion and Valor*, the author noted the large black market in Russia for books by such authors, as well as for Russian translations of G. Bernanos, Graham Greene, Lewis, and Chesterton.

A great Russian and Polish literature has spoken from this revived and recovered religious tradition—it includes Boris Pasternak (the centennial of whose birth is this year), the Mandelstams, A. Sinyavsky, Irina Ratushinskaya, Joseph Brodsky, and Czeslaw Milosz, as well as Solzhenitsyn, the first one and the last three being Nobel Price winners. In addition, the remembered vision of the Godly Jews of Eastern Europe has animated the work of another Nobel Prize winner, Isaac Bashevis Singer. The Polish-Catholic émigré Milosz has praised the Polish-Jewish émigré Singer: "I feel great affinity with Singer because we both came from religious backgrounds. . . . We both constantly deal with similar sorts of metaphysical problems." So, too, the Polish philosophers Leszek Kolakowski and Pope John Paul II have come to deal with these "metaphysical problems" that Western liberal positivism and commercial pragmatism have dismissed with frosty indifference.

Kolakowski's 1982 book *Religion* was subtitled "If there is no God," and the book is haunted by the famous assertion of Dostoevsky that "if there is not God, everything is permitted." Dostoevsky dramatized this view in a number of places and characters in his novels, and Solzhenitsyn clearly follows him in *August 1914* in depicting the victory of this nihilistic concept in the mind and behavior of the student Bogrov, who assassinated Prime Minister Peter Stolypin in 1911 and thus helped to push Russia into the weakness and poor leadership that led to World War I and that catastrophic toxin, the Bolshevik Revolution. The great Dostoevskyans follow not only Dostoevsky in this view of the nihilistic consequences of atheism, but also the theist Burke, who wrote in 1790: "For what is liberty, without wisdom and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils." And for Burke wisdom and virtue were to be found only in the attempt to discern and follow God's will.

Yet the great Russians and Poles have had so horrifying a history at the hands of Nietzschean Nazis and Marxist Communists that they have observed and proved these truths in their own lives: they have been tried in the furnace of affliction. Thus in an apparent paradox that is a profound vindication of the Judeo-Christian tradition of belief, psychology, and anthropology, Nadezhda Mandelstam has written that "the feeling of sinfulness is the basic 'wealth of man' because the awareness of the actual responsibility for one's destiny and that of others makes a person spiritually free and brings him back in touch with life."

For all these writers, as for Eliot, the death of God means the death of the Good in any stable, sane, objective, believable sense, thus the death of ethics ("After Virtue") and, consequently, the death of the human person ("the abolition of man") as a moral entity having a created and inalienable value. "The relativization of the Absolute," the Russian émigré philosopher Levitsky put it, "leads to the absolutization of the relative." This "relative" may be a class, a nation, a party, or an individual. Ayn Rand was a refugee from Bolshevik barbarism who promoted the opposite extreme of Nietzschean libertarian immoralism, the "imperial self" relocated to California.

It is Solzhenitsyn's great achievement to have unearthed, revitalized, and embodied in imaginative forms of great power a Judeo-Christian understanding of God, nature, society, and the human person that avoids all these terrible, heretical "-isms" of modernity, and which occupies the humane and Godly space between the extremes of anarchic individualism and tyrannical collectivism. It is sometimes forgotten that one of the great prophetic novels of the early part of our century, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), commences with an epigraph from the Dostoevskyan Berdyaev, has its moral center of gravity in Shakespeare and Cardinal Newman, and paints as its gruesome objects of satirical attack a libertine, consumerist, drugged pornotopia and a technobureaucratic "scientific socialism" drawn together from tendencies Huxley observed in the West and the East, respectively. Solzhenitsyn's polemical nonfiction writings, like those of the contemporary French Protestant philosopher Jacques Ellul (whose work Huxley helped get translated into English), have the same targets. Precisely in the way that Reinhold Niebuhr thought appropriate to the prophet, Solzhenitsyn in his polemical prose "afflicts the comfortable and comforts the afflicted."

In his fiction, Solzhenitsyn combines Dostoevsky's beliefs and intentions with Tolstoy's realistic narrative

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method. Yet if he employs Tolstoy's method, he does not much like the man, especially in light of the uses to which the Bolsheviks put his pacifism, romantic primitivism, and heterodox Christian socialism. In *August 1914*, Solzhenitsyn depicts Tolstoy in his later years as a kind of bogus guru, a terrible simplifier of issues of considerable complexity, such as the differences between a state and a family and between Christian "communist" ideals and practical political and economic realities. Solzhenitsyn's political views, *mutatis mutandis*, would be very much in the vicinity of Christians such as Chesterton, Lewis, Niebuhr, and the southern Agrarians (not for nothing in *Why the South Will Survive* [1981] did Marion Montgomery write of "Solzhenitsyn as Southerner"). Distributism, a tolerant but profound Judeo-Christian realism, a non-aggressive, non-expansionist, non-chauvinistic patriotism, and a sense of prudent civic duty are very much Solzhenitsyn's prescription for the ills of Russia, and of the West generally.

These ideals he sees and depicts in *August 1914* in the life of the great Russian pre-revolutionary Prime Minister Peter Stolypin (1862-1911), whose life and reforming project were cut tragically short by assassination. Solzhenitsyn's vast Tolstoyan narrative is surely in the great tradition of the nineteenth-century realistic novel that attempted to see and depict life "steadily and whole." Like only the greatest of writers, Solzhenitsyn taxes his reader and changes his expectations; he *creates* his audience in the sense of changing and developing its taste and emotional-moral disposition of attention and concern. Ever since the advent of what Czeslaw Milosz calls the "sly aestheticism" of Flaubert and of Stendhal, augmented and continued by Joyce, Forster, Hemingway, and a host of others, modern readers have learned or been encouraged to spurn or mock moral earnestness (unless Marxist), to become instead liberated "connoisseurs of chaos." Solzhenitsyn, in the tradition not only of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Pasternak, but also of Manzoni, Dickens, and George Eliot, will have none of this. Our century is too tragic; the stakes are too high. As Saul Bellow memorably put it in *Herzog*:

> A merely aesthetic critique of modern history! After the wars and mass killings! You are too intelligent for this. You inherited rich blood. Your father peddled apples.

Raised in poverty, fired in the furnace of affliction in war, slave-labor camp, and cancer ward, Solzhenitsyn has seen life *in extremis*, denuded of affluence, comfort, and illusion. A "merely aesthetic critique" will not do; fashionable moral nihilism—what Raymond Aron called "the nihilism of the aesthete"—will not do. "The idea that there actually couldn't be a moral debate in a literary work," William Empson wrote, "amounts to a collapse of the Western mind." However much E. M. Forster is credited with an exemplary, liberal, agnostic humanism, the real core and implication of his homosexual aestheticism is, as F. R. Leavis argued, far from wise or good. Here is the perverse epiphany in *A Passage to India*: "Pathos, piety, courage—they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value."

Here is the "collapse of the Western mind," in spades. Perhaps one may be forgiven for doubting that it is either true, good, or beautiful, in any sense that those words can intelligibly carry. These words of the weary, sophisticated, sybaritic Cambridge pederast could not be wrung out of the breast and mouth of the Russian witness and *Zek*. Cheap mockery of "the importance of being earnest" is not enough to deter or intimidate into silence the survivor of Soviet "scientific socialism."

Moral debate—the essence of all our greatest literature—takes place not only in *August 1914* as a whole, but within each of the major characters, especially the assassin Bogrov. In understanding and depicting this inner duality, this *bellum intestine*, Solzhenitsyn is the heir not only of Shakespeare (consider the great soliloquies) and Dostoevsky (consider characters such as Kirilov in *The Devils*—clearly a model for Bogrov), but also of the deepest religious-moral sources and texts of the West, such as St. Paul and Seneca. In dramatizing the conflict within the mind and soul of young Bogrov, Solzhenitsyn reaches a depth of moral and psychological realism that only literature (and liturgy) can plumb, but which is the humanizing legacy of all great psychologists and moralists in our tradition. The understanding of the duplicitous self, of *homo duplex*, of the self as an abyss of good and evil that is only made into what it ought to be by choice, will, faith, and grace, puts Solzhenitsyn in fact very close to the Augustinian Eliot, who warned in "The Rock" of the illusions of liberal and Marxist progressivism:

> They constantly try to escape
> From the darkness outside and within
> By dreaming of systems so perfect that no one
> will need to be good.

In a similar vein, Chesterton noted "the colossal contrast between the completeness of man's machines and the continued corruption of his motives," and "the fact that no social progress really seems to leave self behind." This is the classic, orthodox point of Solzhenitsyn's great "Ascent" chapter in volume II of *The Gulag Archipelago*.

But such somber and sobering Augustinian-Dostoevskyan insights into the complex dualities of the human person do not leave Solzhenitsyn pessimistic or quietistic. In fact, devoted Orthodox Christian that Solzhenitsyn is, the cultic, superstitious, passive possibilities of a quietistic and excessively

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transcendental Christian theism are nevertheless harshly depicted and implicitly condemned in *August 1914*. Both General Samsonov, victim of the great Tannenberg defeat of August 1914, and Czar Nicholas II himself are depicted as sincerely but excessively and superstitiously religious and fatalistic—the kind of believers for whom the idea that "it's all in God's hands" is used as an excuse for inaction. Both men pray and adore and venerate icons; Nicholas frequently attends divine service and constantly implores God's help. But both men—Nicholas more than Samsonov—are harshly judged for this passive dereliction of duty, for their incapacity or unwillingness to exert themselves energetically and prudently to prosecute affairs in the messy "in-between" state in which we all must live much of our lives. Nicholas emerges, tragically, as sincere but not saintly: as weak, feckless, self-indulgent, and foolish. Anyone who thinks of Solzhenitsyn as a romantic Czarist or uncritical apologist for or admirer of the Old Regime cannot have read this book.

If Samsonov and Nicholas are superstitious, weak, and religiously fatalistic, the portrait of Lenin shows us the dedicated fanatic, the revolutionary despot in the making. He has no doubt, piety, or passivity, but a furious, audacious certainty about his own motives, plans, and abilities. Solzhenitsyn's brilliant portrait of Lenin reminds one of the estimates of him by Bertram D. Wolfe (Lenin as "selfless egotist"), Edward Crankshaw ("one of the most detestable men who ever lived, [whose] contemptuous dictatorship [was] a disaster for Russia and mankind"), and A. J. P. Taylor ("He wanted to know how to get to the right end of a gun and stay there"), as well as of Dostoevsky's moral fanatics in *The Devils*, published in 1872, two years after Lenin's birth.

Lenin and Bogrov are both types of what Michael Polanyi called "moral inversion," an idea that Polanyi, an émigré Hungarian-Jewish chemist in England, was forced to recognize in discussions in 1935 with the Communist Nikolai Bukharin, then a leading theorist of the Soviet Communist Party, though later, like so many, purged by Stalin. This is a type that Polanyi also observed in Dostoevsky's novels. "The morally inverted person," Polanyi wrote in *Meaning* (1975), "has not merely performed a philosophic substitution of material purposes for moral aims; he is acting with the whole force of his homeless moral passions within a purely materialistic framework of purposes." Marxism, alleging itself to be "scientific socialism," is, in the words of the German historian Willi Schlamm, "scientism gone political," and the greatest and most lethal heresy of the twentieth century, akin to "National Socialism" in its idolatry and warped misunderstanding and misuse of scientific ideas.

The assassin Bogrov is more sympathetically portrayed by Solzhenitsyn than is Lenin. As with Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov and Kirilov, Bogrov's fantasies wildly oscillate between delusions of grandeur and depression. He alternately sees himself as a Napoleonic-Nietzschean "great man" who can change history and earn fame, and as a nobody. Adding to Bogrov's ambivalence is his Jewishness, which scalds and brands him with a sense of agonized differentness from the Russians around him and pushes him toward the hypothetical universalism of revolutionary Marxist messianism. That many Jewish youths in Russia and all over Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries felt this agonizingly sharpened hyper-consciousness and sense of grievance is a theme carefully explored in such works as Robert S. Wistrich's *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky*, John Murray Cuddihy's *The Ordeal of Civility*, and David Biale's *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*.

The most unfair and misleading estimate of Solzhenitsyn's depiction of Bogrov is Irving Howe's charge, in the *New York Times Book Review* (2 July 1989), of an "ugly" anti-Semitism. As painful as the fact may be to some, large numbers of Jews have always—for quite understandable reasons—been attracted to Marxism. Norman Podhoretz has judiciously discussed the subject of Solzhenitsyn and anti-Semitism in his book *The Bloody Crossroads*:

> I can well imagine that in [Solzhenitsyn's] heart he holds it against the Jews that so many of the old Bolsheviks, the makers of the Revolution that brought the curse of Communism to Russia, were of Jewish origin; and in general he . . . seems to ignore the mordant truth behind the old quip (playing on the fact that Trotsky's real name was Bronstein) that "the Trotskys make the revolutions, the Bronsteins pay the bill." Still, whatever there may be in his heart, there is no overt anti-Semitism in any of his translated works.

Podhoretz also notes that Solzhenitsyn has always been a defender of Israel.

Bogrov's Jewishness accentuates his alienation and makes him vulnerable to Marxist promises, but his essential character is that of the "morally inverted" Russian nihilist student depicted with various degrees of sympathy, and in various postures of ferocity or fanaticism, in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Devils*. And in fact the disproof of the charge of anti-Semitism against Solzhenitsyn is found in another character in *August 1914*, the noble, hard-working Jewish engineer Ilya Isakovich Arkhangorodsky. This Jewish engineer and his friend Obodovsky give an impressive and moving defense of political, social, and economic views that must be Solzhenitsyn's own. This aspect of Solzhenitsyn's work could not have appealed to Irving Howe since it includes careful criticism of socialist slogans and shibboleths. A radical in his youth, the engineer Obodovsky has changed his mind about political economy, now holding commonsense free-enterprise

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views. "What worried me most at one time," he says,

> was how to [distribute] what was produced with no help from me. Now I mainly worry about creating something. The best heads and hands in the country must devote themselves to that, poorer heads can attend to distribution. When enough has been created, nobody will be left without a share even if distribution is erratic.

The two engineers are lonely voices in the novel, overwhelmed by various extremes: a feckless, self-indulgent aristocracy, for one; for another, a "radical-chic" intelligentsia and their radical student followers, hungrily impatient for "heroic" revolutionary action and excitement. The engineer Arkhangorodsky patiently tries to explain elementary economic and political truths to his rudely transgressive daughter and her radical friends, all of them full of the "terrible simplifier's" self-righteous haste, hell-bent on developing their own "styles of radical will":

> How impatient you are to have your revolution. Of course, shouting is easier and making a revolution is more fun than building Russia up, that's too much like hard work. . . . No one with any sense can be in favor of revolution, because it is just a prolonged process of insane destruction. The main thing about any revolution is that it does not renew a country but ruins it, for a long time to come. And the bloodier, the more protracted the revolution is, the more dearly the people have to pay for it—the better its claim to be called a "Great Revolution."

Trying to remain patient with the young revolutionaries at his table, Arkhangorodsky has a premonition of disaster:

> The more violent the storm, the better, eh? That's simply irresponsible. I've built two hundred mills, steam or electric, in southern Russia, and if a violent storm breaks, how many of them will still be grinding? What will people, including those around this table, do for food?

If, he goes on, you really care for the country, with all its faults and sins, and wish to improve it, "you must gear yourself to the laborious process of history: work, persuade others, and gradually change things." But in an ominous and enormously poignant conclusion he ruefully concedes the implications for Russia of the lethally intoxicating fanaticism common to the Marxist revolutionaries on the left and the Jew-baiting reactionaries on the right:

> His hands held edgeways on the table illustrated his point as he said in a trembling voice: "On this side you have the Black Hundreds, and on this side the Red Hundreds, and in between"—he cupped his hands to represent the hull of a ship—"a handful of practical people are trying to make their way through. They aren't allowed to!" He parted his hands and brought them together with a loud clap. "They will be crushed! They will be squashed flat!"

And so they were: In his book on *The Russian Civil War* of 1917-1920, Evan Mawdsley has estimated that the civil war alone cost Russia seven million lives, not to speak of the famines, reprisals, and mass murders that came after it.

Unlike the imperial selves of modern literature, Solzhenitsyn is interested not in the "liberated self" but in the moral self, and in his Jewish engineer we see a noble example. In greater detail he provides two additional portraits of the moral individual on whose existence any sane and decent society depends for its preservation. These are the Prime Minister, Stolypin, and a young officer at the front in the early days of the war, Colonel Vorotyntsev—the first a historical figure, the second a fictional one, though probably modeled on Solzhenitsyn's father. The portraits of both are extraordinarily gripping and effective artistic achievements, but the portrayal of Stolypin has more than artistic significance. Stolypin's political program, according to the historian Geoffrey Hosking, bears some striking resemblances to the one Solzhenitsyn published in 1974 in his *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*. As Hosking points out:

> Both place great emphasis on private property, encouragement of industry, peasant resettlement in Siberia (which Stolypin promoted to good effect), and on peaceful Russian patriotism, avoiding all unnecessary international entanglements.

Solzhenitsyn's thinking on these matters may well have consequences for the future of his country, now in the midst of developments that he predicted and encouraged.

In a narrower context, *August 1914* in its new augmented form is simply a great historical novel, one of the great narratives of public and private life in the twentieth century. In its insistence on the importance of individuals and individuality in history, and on the conditioned and conditional but real freedom that individuals possess, it undermines the extremes of social determinism and post-moral, anarchistic individualism—the extremes of Marxism or Structuralism and of the radical, post-moral, "self-reliant" individualism promoted by Carlyle, Emerson, Nietzsche, Ayn Rand, Norman Mailer, and other "imperial selves." If Solzhenitsyn has helped give back to Russian readers their real history, obscured and lied

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about for so long by Communist propaganda, he has also given to Western readers something equally precious—an unforgettable example of the moral imagination at work, with the resources of, and in the light of, the Judeo-Christian tradition. In contrast to our *avant-garde* Establishment, Solzhenitsyn is no degenerate son, no "connoisseur of chaos." FT

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ABORTION: THE CLASH OF ABSOLUTES. By LAURENCE H. TRIBE. Norton. 259 pp. $19.95.

Reviewed by **Mary Ann Glendon**

ABORTION: THE CLASH OF ABSOLUTES is an expert brief on behalf of strict adherence to the terms of the abortion liberty granted in *Roe v. Wade*, no matter how much leeway the Supreme Court may give to legislatures in the post-*Webster* era. The renown of its author, Harvard Law Professor Laurence Tribe, is such that the book bids fair to become the official handbook of abortion rights advocates for the next several years. In ten concise, clearly written chapters, he canvasses the current legal situation, the history of abortion, the problem of finding abortion rights in the Constitution, the question of the personhood of the fetus, the politics of abortion, and the possibility of a new approach to this most divisive of political issues.

Tribe's announced purpose is a constructive one: to challenge the inevitability of permanent conflict on abortion policy; to examine critically the arguments on both sides of the debate, identifying areas of common ground and disagreement; and "to lay the groundwork for moving on." He hopes, he says, to persuade his readers "that we need not cling so fiercely to one or the other extreme, that there is room for movement toward healing our divisions over the abortion question based on shared values and goals."

This introductory statement might lead one to suppose that Tribe is about to endorse the sort of accommodation currently being proposed by moderate abortion-rights supporters like Daniel Callahan. These compromises seek to safeguard unborn life in early pregnancy (where empathy with the fetus is more difficult) chiefly by creating opportunities for advice and help to the pregnant woman, but would increase protection for the fetus as its development progresses. Most of Tribe's book, however, is aimed at countering the growing consensus that some sort of political middle ground must be found between a total ban on abortions and the abortion license of *Roe v. Wade*. He puts his very considerable legal and rhetorical talents in the service of shoring up the crumbling doctrine of *Roe*—if not by court decision, then by legislation, and if not by state legislation, then by a pre-emptive federal freedom-of-choice act. Though the book is in the form of a search for accommodation, the search leads Tribe to the position currently taken by the prochoice leadership: not the slightest legal interference with the abortion rights granted by *Roe v. Wade* should be tolerated.

ONE BY ONE Tribe considers and rejects the major proposals for reform of abortion law. He cannot even approve bans on sex-selection abortions, for he sees no evidence that sex-selection abortion is a problem in the United States, and forbidding them could be the camel's nose under the tent, leading to further erosion of abortion rights. Proposals for notification of parents of minors, mandatory counseling and information about alternatives to abortion, regulation of abortion clinics, or limits on the reasons for which abortions may be performed are labeled as pseudo-compromises that "offer only an illusion of reasonable accommodation." Such proposals are "cruel" because, to the extent that some women seeking abortions are denied or delayed, "we will still be faced with the disruptions of life and the unwanted children. . . ." The truly moderate position, Tribe explains, is *Roe* itself, which wisely leaves the decision to the woman herself but permits some regulation in the interest of the fetus after viability—so long as that regulation does not interfere with the woman's "health."

The attempt to portray *Roe* as moderate is not the most convincing part of Tribe's book. Since the Court has defined "health" as "well being," *Roe* leaves virtually no room for protection even of viable fetuses from abortion. This was made abundantly clear in the cases that followed *Roe* where the Court struck down nearly every legislative attempt to regulate late abortions. Even *Webster* merely permits a state to require a test for viability. The post-*Roe* cases reveal how little regulation in the interest of protecting unborn life the Court has been willing to tolerate. In 1979, for example, the Court struck down a legislative attempt to require that post-viability abortions be performed using methods that would give the fetus a chance to be born alive. If *Roe* and its progeny are not extreme, one must wonder why no country other than China has gone so far in exempting abortion from legal regulation.

Although he defends the broad abortion rights granted in *Roe*, Tribe does suggest, with hindsight, that it would have been wiser for the Court to have decided the case on narrower grounds. He explains that the abortion right could then have been expanded slowly in later cases, so as to get the public used to it bit by bit, rather than shocking and galvanizing prolife sentiment with one sudden dramatic decision. (There is a certain tension between these strategic considerations and Tribe's effort to portray *Roe* as moderate.)

After learning that the author approves of no compromise where *Roe*'s abortion liberty is concerned, the reader's curiosity is piqued. What is the new approach that will aid us to transcend conflicts over

MARY ANN GLENDON *is Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. Her most recent book is* The Transformation of Family Law.

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the abortion issue? Stated in the most general way, Tribe's proposal is one that virtually all prolife and prochoice partisans have already accepted: "We must reduce the number of situations in which women are pregnant but do not want to be." Tribe would proceed toward this common ground mainly on two fronts: social programs and technology. Like most prolife supporters who share his unexceptionable goal, Tribe favors efforts to make our society more hospitable to children, supportive of motherhood, and encouraging to child-raising families. To accomplish these ends, he looks mainly toward governmental initiatives through parental leaves, maternity benefits, day care, and so on. He does not mention the large part of prolife activity and resources devoted to some 3,400 local organizations that afford financial and other assistance to enable women to continue with their pregnancies.

THE SOCIAL WELFARE side of Tribe's new approach will appeal to many prolifers, especially those Catholics who see abortion as part of the "seamless garment" of life issues. But it is disappointing that Tribe cites with approval a *New York Times* op-ed piece by President Carter's former Counsel, Lloyd Cutler, arguing that the state has a moral obligation to provide for pregnant women and children if it denies poor women free access to abortions. Tribe praises the article without mentioning the sinister reason Cutler gives for insisting on our social duties to the poor: "The moral zeal of the right-to-life movement ought to be tempered by the realization that for every unwanted child they force into this world, they may be piling huge future obligations on all of us that our Government would be bound to satisfy." There is a world of difference between the preferential option for the poor advocated by many Catholics and Cutler's constricted vision of the human community, reinforced as the latter is with a stern warning about a potential "sharp growth of the underclass." In the former view, public and private social assistance are expressions of neighborliness; in the latter, increased spending for the poor is presented as a punishment for heedless prolifers and a warning to taxpayers.

A Nobel prize will surely be in order for the man or woman who figures out how to bring forth Tribe's (and prolife's) ideal society where abortions will no longer be sought. So far, however, the common goal seems elusive, and the question therefore becomes: What do we do in the meantime? In a section titled "Using Technology to Circumvent Destiny," Tribe speculates that scientific advances may soon render both birth control and abortion safer, simpler, and less physically intrusive.

> An absolutely safe, highly effective, nonintrusive contraceptive could prevent an enormous number of unwanted pregnancies. Even slightly improved contraceptives would reduce the demand for abortions.
>
> Several alternatives to available contraceptive technologies are in effective use in some parts of Europe or are at least being examined seriously. For women these include: contraceptive implants placed under the skin; injectable microspheres and microcapsules that provide a constant dose of a contraceptive hormone over several months; monthly injectables; vaginal rings that release hormones; nasal sprays that prevent ovulation; and, apparently, intracervical implants to neutralize sperm by using an electrical current to deter migration across the cervix and toward the fallopian tubes.

Near-perfect control of procreation, Tribe hopes, may be within our grasp. But how perfect will it be? Most, though not all, birth control innovations are meant to be used by women. Reactions to such matters are subjective, of course, but I must confess that to me this array of implants, injections, rings, sprays, and electric currents does not sound "absolutely safe" or even "nonintrusive." Would many men use the male counterparts to these devices that Tribe dutifully lists in another passage?

When contraception fails, Tribe seems to pin great hopes on RU-486. Referring to its relative safety and ease of use, he finds it hard to see why it should be "denied" to women. As with contraceptives that act upon the woman's body chemistry, however, it is not clear that high-tech is really the safe way to go. The RU-486 method requires the patient to take three doses of this synthetic steroid, followed by an injection or suppository of the hormone prostaglandin. As a contemporary of many women who were told that another steroid, DES, was a simple, safe precaution against miscarriage, I cannot help wondering whether an abortifacient whose long-term effects are unknown is so much a boon to women as to the next generation of tort lawyers.

THE MAIN FLAWS in Tribe's "new" approach, then, are two. Its first prong implies that we should not ask people to respect the lives of unwanted or inconvenient humans as long as we do not have in place a social-welfare state so perfect that pregnancy and child-rearing are no longer burdensome. The second, despite a nod in the direction of male contraception, keeps the main costs of the sexual revolution right where they have always been—on the bodies of women.

Fortunately, there *is* a large middle ground on which moderate prochoice and prolife supporters seem tentatively to be staking out positions. Contrary to stereotypes, and unlike the prochoice leadership, many thoughtful choice supporters are concerned not only with "who decides" but with what is decided. For this reason, abortion-

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rights proponent Daniel Callahan has concluded in a recent essay that the hostility of prochoice leaders to any and all compromise is a tactical mistake. Polls show that most prochoice supporters are troubled by certain grounds for abortion, and that they have a gradualist view of personhood.

Callahan warns that prochoice loses support among its own ranks when it insists that discretionary abortions, for reasons such as sex selection, must be tolerated in order to protect "necessary" abortions. In a revealing passage of his chapter on the politics of abortion, Tribe shows that he knows this too.

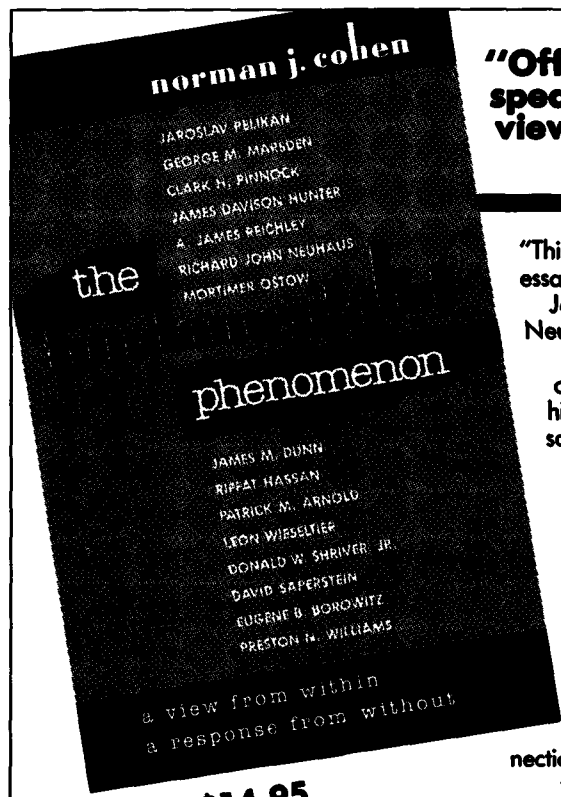
> Polling data suggest that, if the prochoice movement is to maintain its momentum, it cannot let the prolife side shift the debate to why a woman wants any given abortion. The movement's current popularity clearly depends on keeping the question focused on *who* will make the decision.

Much of the prolife leadership has already approached the middle ground that Callahan and other prochoicers have sighted. While insisting on the principle of protection for innocent unborn human life, many prolife leaders have accepted that under current conditions that goal must be pursued incrementally: by seeking the maximum legal protection for unborn life that is legally and culturally sustainable, and continuing to work for the transformation of individuals and society on which all "rights" ultimately depend.

In Tribe's concluding chapter, he too calls for introspection and conversion. He asks prolife and prochoice sympathizers to look deeply within themselves and confront honestly the possibility that their "real" motives may be different from their "professed" ones. The prolife movement, he suggests at several points, is animated "in part" by a reluctance to see women play roles more equal to those of men and by harsh attitudes toward sexual morality. Theories that any significant part of prolife is anti-woman, however, are hard put to explain why women are significantly more prolife than men. It does not take Sherlock Holmes, on the other hand, to discern why the strongest supporters of elective abortion are young men.

The corresponding sin of prochoice, Tribe suggests, may be a certain contempt for the "recent immigrants" and "lower-status religious groups" from which prolife draws disproportionate support. In his speculation about the silent motives of prochoicers, there is no mention of the profit-making abortion industry, or of the social attitudes that occasionally surface in statements like NARAL director Kate Michelman's:

> It's terrible to reduce such an important social issue to this,



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but the truth is that prenatal care, delivery, and the first year of life on welfare cost taxpayers $4,000 a year compared with $250 for an abortion.

My own view is that searches for hidden reasons are not very useful. Any coalitions as diverse as the prolife and prochoice movements will have some members who are animated by base and unworthy motives. After many years of watching the fray, I see no reason not to accept the accounts given by both sides as substantially accurate descriptions of what is most important to most of their supporters. After all, both sets of values *are* important. Women are entitled to equal respect, dignity, and personal liberty. But a society that establishes a constitutional right to dispose of unwanted unborn life may have implicitly adopted the principle that burdensome human beings can be sacrificed at the request of those on whom they depend.

WHERE THE IMPORTANT values of women's liberty and protection of innocent life clash, countries all over the Western world have worked out political accommodations. These compromises do not avoid pain and tragedy—how could they? But they do try to balance compassion for pregnant women and concern for unborn life, sometimes by emphasizing the former in the early stages and the latter as the pregnancy advances. Imperfect? Yes. Unsatisfactory to practically all determined activists on both sides? Yes. But in a democratic and pluralistic society, as Tribe so rightly observes, education, dialogue, persuasion, and, ultimately, voting are "all we've got."

Lest any reader suppose that this review is a disinterested appraisal of Tribe's book, I should clarify my own position. Not only are the author and I friendly colleagues whose views on the abortion issue differ, but Tribe has strongly expressed his disagreement with me in the very book that is here under review. While these circumstances may render me somewhat less "objective" than the usual book reviewer, they also perhaps confer certain advantages, as I will endeavor to show by briefly relating the positions in the current book to the main themes of my colleague's life work.

Though *Abortion: A Clash of Absolutes* is an uncompromising defense of the extreme prochoice position, it is a book shot through with questioning and self-doubt. Tribe's honesty and scientific sophistication compel him to face squarely what some prochoice advocates deny: that the fetus is a developing human life. He is critical of Justice Blackmun in *Roe* and of those prochoice supporters who avoid or deny this simple fact. Just how critical is demonstrated in a 1985 *Harvard Law Review* article where Tribe criticized the Court in *Roe* for "reaching beyond the facts of the case to rank the rights of the mother (sic) categorically over those of the fetus, and to deny the humanity of the fetus (even denying that a *viable* fetus is a 'person' prior to the 'moment' of birth). . . ." Like virtually all constitutional law specialists, regardless of their views on abortion, Tribe has found Justice Blackmun's opinion in *Roe* to be deeply flawed. Tribe's own idea of a better course to have pursued in that case is signaled in the 1985 article where he chides the Court for its failure to show "a more cautious sensitivity to the *mutual* helplessness of the mother and the unborn that could have accented the need for affirmative legislative action to moderate the clash between the two."

The Larry Tribe whose career as a constitutional lawyer has been largely devoted to protecting the rights of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society does not coexist comfortably with the Tribe who reluctantly defends the right to abort what he recognizes as a human person. Nor does the rhetoric of privatization come naturally to a man who espouses an active role for government in enlarging the community of those for whom we assume common responsibility, and who has so effectively shown why private choice must sometimes bow before important social interests such as equal opportunity in employment and equal access to accommodations.

I THUS DISCERN that within *The Clash of Absolutes* there is another clash, a sort of intra-Tribal struggle. It is a struggle between two good guys—the Larry Tribe who is compassionate towards the weak, vulnerable, and disenfranchised against the pioneering feminist Larry Tribe. Like many thoughtful men in the academic world, Tribe seems to feel that, as a male, he cannot appear to be siding with the enemies of feminism. His avowed ambivalence, however, together with the tension between the views expressed in this book and the general development of Tribe's other work, leads me to believe that Tribe will come, as most women do, to accord more weight to the value of protecting human life than is here expressed. His sincere empathy with women will lead him to see that women are not well served by a movement which makes the right to abortion paramount to all others, or which implies that women are so weak that they need not be held morally responsible. His concern for constructing an abortion-free society will lead him to see that *Roe*'s abortion license itself promotes a climate where too many decisions are weighted in favor of abortion. Most important of all, his concern for the oppressed and endangered will lead him to see that none of us, men or women, can afford to let our legal system lapse into careless delegation of decisions about what life is worthy to live.

One of the many qualities that lifts Larry Tribe above the ranks of lesser legal scholars is his willingness to reexamine his positions and change his mind. Given the far-reaching implications of this important contemporary civil rights

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issue, it seems likely that while this book may appear to some abortion rights proponents to be the last word on the subject, it will not be so for its ambivalent author. It is my confident hope that, over time, in *Tribe v. Tribe* the better man will win.

A Man of Contradictions

KAZANTZAKIS: POLITICS OF THE SPIRIT. By PETER BIEN. Princeton University Press. 318 pp. $29.95.

Reviewed by **Matthew Berke**

BY THE TIME he died in 1957, the Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis had established himself as one of the major literary figures of the twentieth century. His extension of the Homerian epic, *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel*, was widely hailed as a masterpiece of poetic narrative; when it appeared in English translation in 1958 John Ciardi called it "a monument of the age." Kazantzakis' most famous work—later made into a highly successful movie starring Anthony Quinn—was *Zorba the Greek*, a book which presented one of the great, memorable characters in modern literature. In this and other writings the style was earthy, colorful, passionate, poetic, and philosophical. A latecomer to the novelist's art, Kazantzakis was considered for the Nobel prize in literature in 1957, reportedly losing by one vote to Albert Camus.

Yet for all his fame, Kazantzakis was—and remains—a highly controversial figure. In his political commitments he was wildly irresponsible, embracing extremism on both the left and the right, sometimes simultaneously. In religion he was a heretic who was condemned and nearly excommunicated by the Greek Orthodox Church. In his novel *The Greek Passion* Kazantzakis reenacted Christ's passion in the setting of a Greek village under Turkish occupation, with the persecution and crucifixion being accomplished through the collaboration of Turkish administration, popular hysteria, and priestly corruption. A later novel, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, restored the passion to its original locale but added novel (and disturbing) elements to the gospel account, such as sexual desire on the part of Jesus himself. That work was condemned not only by the Greek Orthodox Church but also by the Roman Catholic Church, which put it on the Index of forbidden books. In 1988, thirty-one years after his death, Kazantzakis' reputation again became a source of controversy, as a kind of sidebar to the public uproar caused by Martin Scorcese's film version of *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

A new book that sheds considerable light on this complex and contradictory man is *Kazantzakis: Politics of the Spirit*, the first installment of a two-volume "intellectual biography" by Peter Bien, a professor of English at Dartmouth and the translator of three Kazantzakis works (*The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Saint Francis*, and *Report to Greco*). This is a decidely academic treatment that will interest mainly those who are already dedicated Kazantzakophiles, since it concentrates exclusively on the author's intellectual evolution and conveys little sense of the affection and enthusiasm that Kazantzakis usually inspires. Nevertheless, it does make several points of general interest.

Bien explains Kazantzakis' political commitments and literary intentions as reflecting a highly idiosyncratic personal philosophy, worked out in the course of the author's intellectual and spiritual struggles. Born in Turkish-occupied Crete in 1883, Kazantzakis studied and traveled throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa. In his early manhood he developed a worldview that blended elements of Nietzsche, Bergson, and William James—along with Jesus, Genghis Khan, Lenin, Buddha, Odysseus, St. Francis, Darwin, Rosa Luxemburg, Don Quixote, and Oswald Spengler! By normal standards this is a strange and unstable brew, but in Kazantzakis' mind, at least, there was a coherence to the whole.

PROFESSOR BIEN has set out, by careful and patient analysis, to show how the various elements interact, or—to switch metaphors—how the various spiritual and intellectual strands are interwoven in Kazantzakis' own thought. In brief, Kazantzakis saw life as a struggle in which the creative force in man (basically, the élan vital of Bergson) seeks constantly to overcome its limitations until it becomes divine. He repeatedly spoke of a process (taken largely from Bergson's notion of "creative evolution") by which "matter is transubstantiated into spirit." This struggle involves a series of violent clashes between opposing forces in the soul: mind and matter, spirit and flesh, instinct and reason, vitality and form, action and contemplation. On the social and historical level, Kazantzakis saw this evolutionary process as requiring terrible, bloody, and catastrophic upheavals.

According to Bien, Kazantzakis understood the modern era as a "transitional age" in which the human race was poised between the decadence of the old civilization and the fulfillment of a new, authentic, vital, and liberating order. Like Nietzsche, he utterly despised liberal, bourgeois civilization, which he saw as being dominated by technology, materialism, and a suffocating comfort that worshipped security above all else. Also like Nietzsche, Kazantzakis was a bookish, reflective person who admired men of energy and action. He proposed a restoration of pagan vitality and freedom over bourgeois inertia and self-restraint. He was quite willing, even eager, to see bourgeois society swept away in a great cleansing tidal wave of violence and destruction. He supported whatever political movement seemed at the moment to

MATTHEW BERKE *is Managing Editor of* FIRST THINGS.

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display the passion and furious energy necessary to effect the transition. As a consequence, Kazantzakis was at various times a nationalist, a fascist (or at least proto-fascist), a communist, and a socialist. He was all of them and yet none of them since each was, to his mind, merely a vehicle for advancing a more primary spiritual and cultural agenda. He tried them on, found them wanting, and threw them off as recklessly as he had originally embraced them.

Thus, Bien concludes, Kazantzakis was not a truly political thinker at all, in that he did not involve himself in the practical aspects of politics, e.g., weighing and balancing various claims and rights, considering the requirements and limitations of justice in specific and concrete situations. Rather, Kazantzakis was basically a religious and spiritual figure with an "eschatological mentality" that could not rest content with anything less than a "metapolitical" enterprise. Of course, eschatological mentalities do try to incarnate their aspirations in politics—much to the unhappiness of the world. What distinguishes Kazantzakis from other artists and philosophers is that he fell into so many different eschatological follies.

During the public controversy over the film version of *The Last Temptation*, a conservative commentator snarled that Kazantzakis, in addition to being a disseminator of heresy, was "hard left." True, he was hard left, but he was also hard right—and sometimes both at the same time, as in the 1920s when he admired Lenin *and* Mussolini, and in the 1930s during the Spanish Civil War when he admired both the Communists *and* the Francoists. In sum, it is hard to find a single pejorative that does justice to Kazantzakis' politics. The sheer comprehensiveness of his political error recalls the old joke about the bigot who denies any specific form of racial or ethnic bias. "I'm not prejudiced," he says, "I hate *everybody*."

Though he never abandoned political concerns altogether, Kazantzakis did come to recognize, as Bien explains, "that freedom in his case had to be sought in the imaginative realm of artistic creation rather than in the practical realm of politics." In imaginative writing Kazantzakis' peculiar genius found an outlet that was creative rather than destructive for society, and fulfilling rather than frustrating for himself. Although Bien does not pursue this matter at length, one hopes that he will do so in his second volume. The exasperating, often unlikable subject of this biography also happens to be a beloved author to many readers—precisely because his self-expression in art avoids the worst monstrosities and absurdities of his politics and philosophy.

IN POLITICS AND philosophy the need for coherence may sometimes produce false and premature resolutions of life's contradictions and tensions. In art, by contrast—especially in narrative art—there is some relaxation of the requirement to make coherence out of life's diverse moods, tendencies, and impulses. Indeed, the truest witness to life as it is experienced often involves giving testimony to the unresolved tensions and loose ends of human existence. Frequently only a partial and tentative integration is possible.

Zorba the Greek, Kazantzakis' best-known and possibly his best work, is full of unresolved tensions, particularly the tension between Dionysian vitality, sensuality, spontaneity, and exuberance (represented by Zorba) and Apollonian rationality, restraint, and contemplativeness (represented by "Boss," the narrator-protagonist). When, in stories, Kazantzakis presents life as it is experienced, his worldview appears less ruthless than in his politics or philosophy. The fierce tension and the spiritual and intellectual power remain—but one also feels in his novels a humanity and largeness, as in *Zorba*, for instance, when the narrator recalls:

> When I was still at school, I had organized a Friendly Society—that was the name we gave it—and, locked in my bedroom, we swore that, all our life, we would devote ourselves to the fighting of injustice. Great tears ran down our faces when, with hand on heart, we took the oath. . . . Puerile ideals! But woe betide whoever laughs when he hears them.

Kazantzakis' appalling tolerance (even endorsement) of political violence assumes, in his novel, a softening skepticism and irony, as when Zorba remarks:

> It's a mystery . . . a great mystery! So, if we want liberty in this bad world, we've got to have all those murders, all those lousy tricks, have we? . . . And yet, the result of all that, what's it been? Liberty! Instead of wiping us out with a thunderbolt, God gives us liberty! I just don't understand!

Of course, a wise philosopher or theologian might explain that the "cunning of history" or the providence of God may sometimes bring good out of evil—but he would be quick to add that this truth provides no justification, before the fact, for treachery and murder. It was that great, mystical philosopher-statesman, Abraham Lincoln, who brought this insight into political discourse by quoting from Scripture: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." Kazantzakis was incapable of such wisdom in political or philosophical terms, but in his narrative and story-telling he approaches the same insight.

In yet another instance, it is in the novelistic form rather than in politics or philosophy that Kazantzakis succeeds in stating an important and perennial tension of life: on the one hand spiritual transcendence above worldly cares and desires, and on the other hand full

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immersion in human passion and longing. In the course of describing lived experience, Kazantzakis is able to give an account of both tendencies without being dishonest to either and without making implausible or monstrous coherences. Early on in *Zorba*, for instance, the narrator-protagonist finds himself

> seized with compassion. A Buddhist compassion, as cold as the conclusion of a metaphysical syllogism. A compassion not only for men but for all life which struggles, cries, weeps, hopes, and does not perceive that everything is a phantasmagoria of nothingness.

AND YET THERE is in this expression of nihilism and resignation a note of protest. The reader is led to feel that everything is *not* a "phantasmagoria of nothingness." Only a few paragraphs earlier this same narrator-protagonist exults not in oblivion as the goal of life, but in a creation that is so good it seems to point toward a fulfillment beyond itself.

> The sea, autumn mildness, islands bathed in light, fine rain spreading a diaphanous veil over the immortal nakedness of Greece. Happy is the man, I thought, who, before dying, has the good fortune to sail the Aegean Sea.
>
> Many are the joys of this world—women, fruit, ideas. But to cleave that sea in the gentle autumnal season, murmuring the name of each islet, is to my mind the joy most apt to transport the heart of man into paradise.

This reverence for created nature in Kazantzakis sometimes spills over into a kind of crude, paganistic pantheism, but in its finest expressions it achieves a sublime, sacramental character. In his novel *Saint Francis*, Kazantzakis' prose overflows with gratitude to God for the beauties of Creation: green meadows, grape vineyards, fig trees and olive trees, pine groves, fields of poppies and daisies, freshly mown hay, the fragrance of the soil in the clean air after a rain. Describing a moment of bliss on a summer's day: "A warm breeze was blowing, the kind that induces buds to open. It reached right down into my heart and made it open too."

In this novel, as in others, Kazantzakis invites the reader to take in the sight and smell and taste and feel of nature, to look at Creation anew with awe, wonder, and gratitude—to drink it in in deep draughts. Many Kazantzakis readers come to feel a kinship and gratitude to this author, much like the feeling that the character of Boss has for his alter-ego Zorba:

> I felt, as I listened to Zorba, that the world was recovering its pristine freshness. All the dulled daily things regained the brightness they had in the beginning, when we came out of the hands of God.

The reader of literature who is not overly concerned about every philosophical influence behind a story, or the remote implications of all its ideas, often comes away from Kazantzakis feeling revitalized and refreshed, more awake and alive, reminded of primal longings and intense passions, and rededicated to seeking that fullness and abundance of life which the God of the Bible has willed for us. The recurring theme of dance and music in *Zorba* is part of Kazantzakis' effort to recover the intuitive, the passionate, and the primitive.

Besides his attunement to the glory and sacramental character of Creation, Kazantzakis displays another important saving grace: humor. Ruthless philosophizing and monstrous politics cannot maintain themselves in the face of humor—which is in most cases a matter of irony, the lethal enemy of fanatical certainty and inhuman coherence. The element of humor in Kazantzakis is probably most prominent in *Zorba the Greek*, and it was well exploited by Anthony Quinn in Michael Cacoyannis' cinematic version of the story. Zorba declares, "I'm not joking, boss. I think of God as being exactly like me. Only bigger, stronger, crazier. And immortal, into the bargain."

MUCH OF THE humor derives from the way that Zorba's natural spontaneity, impulsiveness, and coarseness is used to contrast with, and render ridiculous, the effete, delicate, and over-intellectualized life of Boss (as well as the author himself). Zorba chides the narrator-protagonist for always thinking too much, for weighing everything like a grocer. "Come on, friend, make up your mind. Take the plunge!" A man needs a bit of folly, he says later on—otherwise he can never cut the string and be free. As a kind of benign Nietzsche, Zorba exhorts his overly intellectual comrade not to seek a painless, danger-free existence; to live, he says, is to undo your belt and look for trouble. It may perhaps be conceded that Kazantzakis' Dionysian, Nietzschean approach to life might not be the best influence for an already impetuous and irresponsibly impulsive person; but for bookish types like Boss, who read and think too much, it provides a thoroughly wholesome antidote.

There remains some question as to whether Kazantzakis was ultimately a pagan or a Christian. For a time he had considered himself a pure atheist. Under the spell of Nietzsche, he had wanted to destroy the whole Christian project. But he never totally shook off his religious impulses, and in an early philosophical work, *The Saviors of God* (1927), Kazantzakis was already writing in theological (if heretical) terms. By the time he wrote *The Last Temptation of Christ* he had come a long way back in the direction of Christian spirituality. To be sure, his Christ is in key respects more a Nietzschean "superman" than the Christ of the gospels. (Michael Novak, writing in *Commonweal* in 1960, summed up the problem of the book: "Perhaps it is wiser to read Kazantzakis' novel not as an image of Christ, but as an image of Kazantzakis' own struggle of spirit with

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flesh.") Nevertheless, many readers sympathetic to the gospel account still managed to find Kazantzakis compelling and provocative in other respects—particularly his evocation of Jesus' time and place. Bien points out that Kazantzakis never, not even in his final period, returned to being a Christian in the sense of accepting all the orthodox doctrines, such as the resurrection and the life to come. But he notes that Kazantzakis had begun to deal with religious and spiritual issues in an increasingly Christian way—in his sense of a suffering that hallows the soul, in his affirmation of spirit over matter, and in his assertion that true freedom transcends the political.

To the end, Kazantzakis remained a heretic and a blasphemer, and he was usually an exasperating rather than a lovable eccentric, as Bien's biography reminds us. Nevertheless, Kazantzakis probably should be judged for his literary achievement rather than his philosophy, politics, or personal life. Therein lies his true legacy: strong emotions and heartfelt responses expressed through a great and unforgettable literary art, an inspiring affirmation of life despite tragedy and death, and an infectious love for God's Creation, and for the vital energy He has implanted in the human spirit.

Poverty and Morality

THE UNDESERVING POOR: FROM THE WAR ON POVERTY TO THE WAR ON WELFARE. By MICHAEL B. KATZ. Pantheon Books. 293 pp. $22.95 cloth; $14.95 paper.

Reviewed by **Lawrence M. Mead**

IN *The Undeserving Poor*, there are two Michael Katzes on view, the historian and the social commentator, and the former is much the more persuasive. Katz, who teaches history at the University of Pennsylvania, sets out to describe American debates about the "undeserving" (working-aged) poor since the early 1960s. His purpose is not to tell the detailed story of antipoverty proposals and programs, but to portray the thinking that influenced social policy in the Great Society and Reagan periods. In this mission he largely succeeds. *The Undeserving Poor* is the best intellectual history of antipoverty policy I know.

In the early 1960s, Katz recalls, sociologists and anthropologists such as Oscar Lewis attributed endemic poverty to a "culture of poverty." The poor might initially be victims of their environment, but they also derived passive, self-defeating attitudes from the experience. These kept them poor even when, as in contemporary America, the opportunities for them improved. The conception was supposed to be liberal, but it was rejected by black and feminist critics further to the left. They defended the female-headed family as an adaptation to poverty, and they characterized the ghetto as an "internal colony" of a racist and exploitative society.

The War on Poverty rested on a compromise between this radical view and the traditional moralistic attitude that the poor ought to shape up if they wanted to get ahead. Federal programmers said poverty had structural causes, yet the main aim of antipoverty programs was to enhance the skills of the poor, not to recast society. Welfare reformers wanted to guarantee the poor an income, but they also accepted the market nature of society, as the socialist left of Europe did not.

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 brought "culture" back onto the research and policymaking agendas. A string of conservative authors blamed poverty on the lifestyle of the poor. Katz characterizes the arguments of George Gilder, Charles Murray, and myself at some length and—allowing for his hostility—not unfairly. He goes on to describe recent debates about the homeless and the underclass, meaning the most disordered of the urban poor. A consensus has developed, shared by experts of both left and right, that the dependent poor ought to work or prepare for work in return for support.

AS A SUMMARY of ideas, the book is impressive. But Katz also wants to criticize the intellectual developments, and in this he is less persuasive. I do agree with him that reasoning about poverty has been unduly narrow and "apolitical." What Katz calls "poverty discourse" has focused mainly on distinctions among the poor and the effect of welfare on their behavior, especially work effort. Part of the explanation is the domination of antipoverty analysis by economists since the late 1960s. They deal with poverty antiseptically, and they possess "hard" statistical research skills that compel respect in Washington and academia. But they are much better at measuring poverty than at explaining or interpreting it.

But what interpretation of poverty do we choose? Katz favors the old-left view that it is a "social product," an inevitable result of America's capitalist "political economy." To establish this, however, one has to show how social structure keeps the poor down in an apparently free society. Especially, one has to show why so few poor adults work, or even look for work, consistently. Work levels among the poor have dropped sharply in the last thirty years. By 1987, three-fifths of poor adults had no earnings at all. In most cases, that was the immediate reason they were poor, as people who work normal hours are very seldom needy or dependent, even at low wages. There are still working poor, but they are considerably outnumbered by the nonworking. Accordingly, those who would blame poverty on society have to show that the poor *cannot* work.

This no one has done. Katz cites William Julius Wilson and others who say that the decline of manufacturing has deprived the urban poor of employment. Allegedly, lower-skilled work is now available mainly in the suburbs, beyond the reach of the inner-city poor, while jobs in the cities require more education than they have. But Katz does

LAWRENCE M. MEAD *is Associate Professor of Politics at New York University and the author of* Beyond Entitlement.

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not know this literature well. In fact, the mismatch theory is rejected by most experts. No one has succeeded in attributing the bulk of working-aged poverty to any "social barrier," be it racism, low wages, lack of jobs, welfare disincentives, lack of child care, or low skills. Some of these factors help to explain *inequality among workers*. They do not, on the whole, explain the failure of so many poor to work *at all*.

Katz criticizes liberal intellectuals for failing to rebut the conservatives. He says that John Rawls, Charles Reich, and their like have failed to construct a persuasive new rationale for the welfare state. They have constructed arguments for redistribution or entitlement to welfare, but they have spoken as academic technicians, not moralists. They have not, as Katz would wish, mounted a full-blooded attack on inequality and the rule of the market in America. They have not conjured up a vision of an alternative society based on "dignity" and "community" that would include the now-excluded poor as equals.

THE CLOSEST approximation to such a statement, Katz believes, was *Economic Justice for All*, the pastoral letter about the U.S. economy published by the bishops of the American Catholic Church in 1986. Katz claims that the bishops had a fairer idea of social contract than do the advocates of workfare. But though the letter says that the poor have responsibilities, it is entirely vague about them. All the detail is about the new benefits and protections the poor should get. The first, though not the final, draft of the letter bitterly rejected work requirements. Protestant and Jewish hierarchies speak in much the same way. For the institutional church, like the political left, justice for the lower orders consists only of rights and claims.

Katz is too hard on his allies. He fails to allow for how the increasing passivity of poverty has cut the heart out of the radical case. If today's poor were simply victims of racism or joblessness, if like the Joad family of *The Grapes of Wrath* they roamed the country seeking any work they could get, the case for structural reform in America would be infinitely easier to make.

Nonworking poverty has irrevocably changed political discourse about social justice. It is now about personal more than impersonal things. It has become less ideological and more moralistic. The old debate was about social structure, about whether the market or government should organize society. It took competence for granted, meaning the capacity of the downtrodden to get ahead. The current debate is about competence, and it takes social structure for granted. Most experts believe that the disadvantaged have enough opportunity to escape poverty and dependency, if not to earn mainstream incomes. They debate rather whether the poor are personally able to work or otherwise function better than they do. Essentially, liberals say no and conservatives yes.

Commentators like Katz have not caught up. He says that the purpose of workfare is to create "a reserve army of labor desperate to work whatever the wages." The words are Marxist and quaint. They conjure up a forgotten era when the disadvantaged constituted a *working* class, rather than a nonworking *lumpenproletariat*. Would that Katz were right. Under current conditions, poor people desperate to work would rarely be poor at all. Those that were would be much easier to help, as well as more deserving.

Being Modern

SOURCES OF THE SELF: THE MAKING OF THE MODERN IDENTITY. By CHARLES TAYLOR. Harvard University Press. 601 pp. $29.95.

Reviewed by **Gilbert Meilaender**

TO DESCRIBE *Sources of the Self* as a learned book would be a little like describing Michael Jordan as a skilled basketball player: accurate, but hardly adequate to the phenomenon. And for a reviewer to attempt to capture and explicate the main lines of Charles Taylor's argument is as difficult as it is to appreciate the nuances of a Jordan move to the basket. You have to see it to appreciate it, even as you have to read the 600-page book about which Taylor says, with no apparent irony or condescension, "All I can do is apologize in advance for the incomplete nature of this study."

Sources is in part a work of moral philosophy, and it might also be said in certain respects to be a work of religious apologetic; to these aspects I return later. But in the first place this is a probing piece of intellectual history tracing what the book's subtitle calls "the making of the modern identity." Taylor is careful to say that he is not attempting to provide an historical explanation for the rise of this modern self, an account of the causes that gave rise to it; rather he seeks, by means of a long and complicated narrative, to elucidate its appeal and its "spiritual power."

In particular, he focuses on what he believes to be three central features of the modern identity: (1) its inwardness—its emphasis on and appreciation of the free, rational inner self as a being with inherent dignity, a being disengaged from the natural world around it; (2) its affirmation of ordinary life—of the spheres of family and work as the locus of a fulfilled life and the arena in which our benevolence is to be enacted; (3) its emphasis on the individual feeling and creative imagination of the "expressivist self," for whom personal identity is essentially a work of self-creation.

In Taylor's narrative, Plato stands as the representative of the ancient view of the self, for which being rational meant conforming oneself to an objective order outside the self. And Descartes is the central figure in the modern emphasis on a free inner self, disengaged from nature and able through reason to control the natural world. But "on the way from Plato to Descartes stands Augustine," and the turn inward begins with him. "It is hardly an exagger-

GILBERT MEILAENDER *is the author of* The Limits of Love.

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ation," Taylor writes, "to say that it was Augustine who introduced the inwardness of radical reflexivity and bequeathed it to the Western tradition of thought."

Surely there is truth in such a claim; yet one wonders whether it is sufficient to see Augustine as standing at the beginning of a conveyer belt headed toward the modern expressivist self. He seems in many ways—even when he differs from Plato—to be much closer to Plato than, say, to Rousseau. And the difference is that Augustine simply could not conceive of personal identity as a work of self-creation, which gives his inwardness its own peculiar character. God is not just the principle of order to be known, but the One who illumines our seeing and empowers our knowing. For that reason the way to God leads inward through the self. But it is always for Augustine the way to One who is outside the self and other than the self. That is the truth Augustine discovers in his exploration of the longing of the restless heart: such longing should not curve back upon itself but should find its rest in the God who is Absolutely Other.

IT SEEMS A much more decisive step in the formation of the modern identity, therefore, when Taylor suggests that in Descartes the turn inward is no longer for the sake of something outside the self. Moreover, the inner self is now thought to be creative in new ways. With ideas gotten from sense experience the mind constructs scientific knowledge. That is, "ideas" are no longer those substantial, resistant things which Plato thought existed outside the self; they are now within the mind. Something similar happens in morality. As reason should now control and master the mechanism of the natural world, so it should also control and direct the passions. God remains important, but chiefly as a link in the argument. The existence of God guarantees that, if our minds work correctly, we will gain true knowledge. "The Cartesian proof is no longer a search for an encounter with God within. It is no longer the way to an experience of everything in God. Rather what I now meet is myself. . . ."

Taylor traces this emphasis on inwardness through several permutations in thinkers who follow Descartes. One line, running especially through Locke, accentuates the self's disengagement from any objective, external order. The natural world is controlled when it is objectified and demystified. The real self becomes "extensionless" and can be located only "in this power to fix things as objects." Perhaps paradoxically, then, the turn inward leads to thinking even of human lives as would an external observer. The other line, running especially through Montaigne, emphasizes self-exploration more than self-control. Here there is less tendency toward disengagement or a third-person observer stance. "Thus by the turn of the eighteenth century, something recognizably like the modern self is in process of constitution. . . . It holds together, sometimes uneasily, two kinds of radical reflexivity and hence inwardness, . . . forms of self-exploration and forms of self-control."

Hand in hand with increasing inwardness goes a newly developing affirmation of production (work) and reproduction (marriage and family). Taylor locates the genesis of this affirmation chiefly in the Protestant Reformers and, more broadly, in the Judeo-Christian understanding of the world as creation. No longer was there a higher kind of life as there had been for the ancients, a life devoted either to theoretical contemplation or to participation in the public activities of a citizen. Instead, the most ordinary realms of life—what the ancients would have regarded as realms that have "an infrastructural relation" to the good life—can now be sanctified by a God-fearing spirit. In the family and in our labor we find meaning and purpose, and we enact our benevolence toward others.

Along with this religious emphasis goes an understanding of science not as the leisured activity of a few whose ordinary life is secure, but as an activity devoted to serving ordinary life and enhancing it for everyone. As the theological matrix for this affirmation of ordinary life gradually fades—as it is seen less as a Calling—the bourgeois ethic's relation to Deism emerges. For a thinker like Locke, we are to serve our own needs and lead productive bourgeois lives. But by God's providence this also is a way of enacting our benevolence to others. Begin to drop a providentially active God from this picture, and we get a vision of life that makes human happiness central and sees us as beings whose dignity lies chiefly in enacting that benevolence in ordinary life. No thought any longer that some ways of life might be "higher" or more appropriate to our nature. Any such hint, which might call for "asceticism" toward the goods of ordinary life, begins to be rejected. (Taylor does not, I think, give enough attention to the way in which these first two features of the modern identity—inwardness and affirmation of ordinary life—may be in tension with each other. While reading his book, I was also reading *Second Chances*, by Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, a study of the effects of divorce on children. That book's grim findings suggest that the search of many unhappy spouses for personal fulfillment is at war with the needs of children. Inwardness and ordinary life are not easily reconciled.)

AT THIS point in Taylor's narrative we have, then, three possible "moral sources" (as he terms them): One is the traditional theistic view, out of which grew the other two—the emphasis on the free rational self, a being with dignity and fit to master nature; and the emphasis on the natural world as the realm in which our benevolence is enacted. These moral sources are the goods which, when we are drawn and committed to them, empower us to do and be good. But central in the development of the modern identity as Taylor understands it is that the two new moral sources become detached from theism. Human dignity seems free only if we do not submit to God. Wholehearted immersion in natural

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life seems qualified unless it is freed from the Call of God, which might, after all, ask us to sacrifice some worldly goods. Despite all this, Taylor sees "epistemic gain" in the development of these new moral sources, believing that they have enriched human life with important new possibilities. As I read him, however, he is much less positive about the third element in his picture of the modern identity: namely, the "expressivist self" for whom personal identity is a work of self-creation.

Taylor traces the development of this last feature of the modern identity not only through philosophical writings but also in literature and, especially, the arts. It leads eventually to a kind of "subject-centeredness" that he is willing at one point to term "insidious." Moreover, this third aspect of modern identity carries within it a deep tension that has been present for several centuries. This tension is, essentially, that between the Enlightenment emphasis on disengaged reason exercising control over nature, and the Romantic emphasis on self-expression and creative imagination. Both are present in a thinker like Rousseau—who surely embodies tension if anyone ever did! One way of trying to combine both is to see them as part of a "spiral movement" within history: Human disengagement from nature was a necessary prerequisite to development of powers that would make possible reengagement at a new and higher level. Hegel offers such a view at a level of considerable philosophical abstraction; millenarian believers offer another, very different, version of such a view. But, in any case, "a modern who recognizes both these powers is constitutionally in tension."

It is crucial to see that this development moves beyond the notion that we are simply expressing or making manifest something that is within us. To think in that way would still be to countenance the possibility of a given order, discerned within, and then expressed. But there is no longer any such inner order. There is only self-expression, which is now self-creation. We turn inward not because that route offers access to something other than and beyond our personal vision. There isn't anything to which we might get "access" in that sense. There is only the self, actualizing itself. Art comes close to replacing religion. It is no longer mimesis, imitation of nature; instead, the artist becomes the author of (a radically individual) nature. At some point, in fact, this radical turn inward comes to suggest the dissolution of the self. We have not an individual identity, but fragments of experience; not the narrative of a life that is in some sense a whole, but a decentered flow of experience. If that is what Taylor finds insidious, my only quarrel would be that perhaps he needs a still stronger adjective.

THIS, AT ANY rate, is a rough summary of the story Taylor narrates in lavish detail. But his is also a work of moral philosophy, articulated in the first four chapters of the book. Taylor wants to argue for a certain kind of communitarian vision of the moral life; namely, that human beings cannot live without a moral "framework" that orients them in moral space and that is grounded in or referred to some defining community. Moral questions must be dealt with in "thick" rather than "thin" terms, understood as embedded within frameworks that give them their point. Indeed, the notion of "an agent free from all frameworks rather spells for us a person in the grip of an appalling identity crisis." This philosophical position dovetails nicely with the larger intellectual history Taylor has written. As we have seen, that history tries to demonstrate that for the modern self there is no longer any publicly established moral order to which all can refer; rather, every view "comes indexed to a personal vision."

At the same time, however, Taylor wants to argue in his opening chapters that this embeddedness in frameworks is an inescapable element in *human* identity—not just, I think, in *our* identity. He claims to be offering an account of "the limits of the conceivable in human life," an account that shows the embeddedness of our moral claims in frameworks referred to communities. But, then, what is the particular location in which Taylor the philosopher stands as he provides this account of the limits of the conceivable? He calls his account, in fact, an account of the "transcendental conditions" of human life. It is refreshing in an age when Richard Rorty and his followers have told us that we cannot speak this way to hear a philosopher doing so, but, at the same time, it is hard to know what to make of such talk in the light of Taylor's other claims.

An account of the transcendental conditions of human life looks very much like the "deliverances of unsituated reason" which Taylor elsewhere terms an "illusion." It is, of course, a position developed within a community of discourse, and in that (to me, somewhat trivial) sense, it will no doubt always be the case that we can be a self only among other selves. But once one grants, as Taylor does, that this community of other selves may even be a community of the dead, one wonders what the point is. Taylor's account of the transcendental conditions of human life is offered from what he hopes may be a universal, foundational standpoint—or so it seems to me.

Even if the philosophical argument does not entirely persuade, we should not therefore conclude that there is no point to Taylor's insistence that we can be selves only by understanding ourselves in relation to some defining community. It retains a practical edge. The point that is relevant to the larger concerns of this book is that we should not try to draw our purposes, goals, and life-plans simply out of ourselves or seek only those attachments that promise to fulfill us. The true self-creator will be not simply insidious but satanic. That is the stronger adjective Taylor might have tried.

Finally, *Sources of the Self* is also a work of religious apologetic. The features of modern identity described by Taylor took their rise first within a background of religious belief. It may therefore be important to ask whether they can survive and flourish

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in ways that are neither destructive nor self-destructive if they are removed from the soil in which they took root. These are questions of the utmost importance, and Taylor is clearly pulled in several directions. A large part of the impulse behind the writing of his book was, he says, the "intuition . . . that we tend in our culture to stifle the spirit." We forget that morality may require of us considerable sacrifice of our personal fulfillment—and that this may be especially true of a religiously based morality, for which God relativizes all other goods. Our "highest spiritual ideals and aspirations also threaten to lay the most crushing burdens on humankind," and Taylor therefore finds it quite understandable that the modern self might turn from such lofty aspirations to the goods of ordinary life and the satisfactions of creative self-fulfillment. For all his concern, therefore, Taylor is not simply a critic of modern life. He does not call for any simple return to a metaphysic which downplays the goods of worldly life in comparison to theoretical contemplation, religious devotion, or civic participation. In short, critics of modern individualism have, in his view, paid too little heed to those "crushing burdens" which came along with the "hypergoods" of the older order.

NEVERTHELESS, Taylor is not fully persuaded that the moral sources of the modern identity are sufficient to sustain commitment to the notions of benevolence and dignity that have also been a part of that identity. We may, that is, be "living beyond our moral means" in trying to retain such demanding, universal standards of morality without the metaphysical and religious substance that once underlay those standards. Indeed, some of the most wistful pages of this large book—pages which show its author drawn in conflicting directions—are Taylor's pages on Hume. He finds in Hume a thinker for whom no ontological support seems needed as warrant for the significance of our life. The natural fulfillments which life offers are significant simply on the grounds that they are ours—satisfying to beings like ourselves. Interestingly, Taylor sees Hume drawing such a view in part from classical Epicurean thought, the one school of classical thought that does not fit Taylor's picture of the older order. This suggests, in passing, that the moral stances Taylor is delineating may be permanent possibilities of the human spirit, not quite so tightly built into particular communities of discourse at particular points of historical development. In any case, Hume is attempting to "remove the burden of impossible moral aspirations," to seek in human life not an ideal that calls us to be more than human, but a home that is like "a garden, a grateful acceptance of a limited space, with its own irregularities and imperfections, but within which something can flower."

We are here at the center of Taylor's concern, and it is best expressed in religious terms. Is commitment to God finally one of those crushing burdens that, in claiming to make our life significant, actually mutilates us? Is the call to holiness, to "a life on God's terms," which has been part of Judeo-Christian vision, soil in which we ultimately wither or flourish? Does the one who loses his life for the sake of such religious commitment thereby find it?

Taylor makes clear that he is a believer, but he is also certain that such commitment—like any serious moral stance—brings with it pain and cost. There are many worthwhile goods in life, but commitment to the highest among them—to hypergoods, as he terms them—may exact a considerable price at the level of many of the lesser, but still genuine, goods. To continue on the road that has led to development of the modern identity may mean (a) the loss of the highest and most ultimate sources of meaning for our lives, and (b) the loss of a framework sturdy enough to sustain some of our most cherished commitments, such as universal benevolence. But to turn away from the features of the modern identity would for Taylor amount simply to trying to "invalidate" some genuine goods. In the end, he settles for "a large element of hope." That is, for the hope he finds in the Judeo-Christian tradition's "promise of a divine affirmation of the human, more total than humans can ever attain unaided."

One might wish that Taylor had considered more fully a possibility that emerges only in one rather long footnote—the possibility that a distinction, though not utter separation, of the spheres of politics and ethics might go some way toward addressing the problem that concerns him. In the political realm it may be necessary to permit as many goods as possible to flourish, without seeking to articulate or develop "the good life," one governed by a demanding hypergood. But such political judgment need not be translated into the view that there is no such thing as "the good life," or that we are not ourselves to seek it and seek through a variety of institutional (though non-governmental) mechanisms to encourage and inculcate that moral and religious vision. Taylor grants that "there is a lot to be said for this," and he writes that "it is quite possible to be strongly in favor of a morality based on a notion of the good but lean to some procedural formula when it comes to the principles of politics."

The fact that he can grant this yet not give such possibility a greater place in his narrative suggests that, with respect to the question of the relation between politics and ethics at least, Taylor is not at all a modern, however much he may believe that the modern identity brings with it some genuine goods. Perhaps the choice he has made is the correct one; yet, a greater distinction between politics and ethics might go well with the hope he affirms in his concluding paragraphs. It would make clear that this hope for a "divine affirmation . . . more total than humans can ever attain unaided" is truly hope in God, and not in the historical process.

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Richard John Neuhaus

The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

The Many Causes of Environmentalism

The Woodstock Center at Georgetown University is where some distinguished Jesuits, and some less distinguished Jesuits, fiddle with their theological fretwork. A recent *Woodstock Report* is entirely given over to fretting about today's favorite crisis, the environment. It comes with a recommended bibliography of seven books, topped by Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality*. The book is described this way: "Going beyond systematic theology, Fox sets forth the ingredients of a *spirituality* that would make us more sensitive to the sacramental character of nature. His major thesis is that theology's over-emphasis on the Fall-Redemption schema has led us unnecessarily to deny the basic goodness of Creation. Though the book is considered controversial and one-sided by some critics, Fox's is a voice that needs to be heard today."

The "Fall-Redemption schema," of course, has to do with that business about our being sinners for whom Christ died. Fr. Matthew Fox, it will be remembered, was silenced by the Vatican last year, which prompted him to take out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* soliciting funds for his projects in cosmic synthesis and christic witchery. "I HAVE BEEN SILENCED!" he announced. But the gimlet-eyed Jesuits are surely right in seeing that his theology is not systematic. Whether it is Christian is . . . well, who is to say these days? One vaguely remembers the time when "Jesuitical" suggested something more sinister than silly.

Admittedly, the sinister and the silly are not mutually exclusive. In times of desperation, the most dubious purposes can continue to be advanced under the banners of myriad fatuities. After the demise of Marxism as an ideological force, and the severe body blows dealt to schemes of socialist "third ways" propounded by "prophetic" religion, the banner of choice is currently THE ENVIRONMENT. Thus the huge confab of the World Council of Churches in Seoul, South Korea, titled the "World Convocation of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation." And thus the gathering at Riverside Church in New York City this past May, "National Conference on Building the Earth Community."

The last was a grand reunion of veterans of the tattered causes of the last several decades, except now under the rallying cry of the environment. Peace-and-justice networking, Third World liberationism, radical feminism, unilateral disarmament, socialist utopianisms—there is little substantive change but, by scissors-and-paste magic, all the speeches and manifestos begin and end with alarums about ecotastrophe. The standard polemics against capitalism, imperialism, racism, militarism, and whatever are now marginally recast in terms of the supposed threat such evils pose to Our Planet—or, as it is now said, "The Earth Community." Such ideological cross-dressing is not surprising. True, yesterday's arguments sometimes look a little odd in today's fashion of environmentalism, but then one remembers that the alternative would be a perhaps painful reexamination of assumptions to which many have attached their identities. As with the Old Left of the thirties, so with the New Old Left of the sixties, it is ever so much more important to "keep the faith" than to think clearly about a changing world.

Then too, religionists of a certain proclivity have a touching need to believe that they are in some important way making history. From almost any source they eagerly embrace the assurance that they can be relevant to "the real world." And so the Riverside conference headlines the assurance of celebrity astronomer Carl Sagan, who says that "scientists and the religious community must work together to preserve the environment of the Earth. The historical record makes clear that religious

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teaching, example, and leadership are powerfully able to influence personal conduct and commitment." Sagan is outspoken about his adherence to atheistic materialism, a belief system that, however implausible, he has every right to promote. The remarkable thing is that Christians and Jews should feel complimented when he pats them on the head by admitting that their religion is nonetheless useful in changing the world. He does not go so far as to say that religion is a noble lie, but he is prepared to acknowledge that it is a useful lie. That is enough for him to be gratefully applauded by religionists who are thus reassured that they still have a role to play, no matter how modest, in making history.

These are among the dynamics that account for the crowding of the environmental tent with the refugees from causes past. But, in addition to finding an ecological preservative for ideas fast spoiling, and in addition to the need for comforting assurances that religion is still relevant, environmentalism offers new "spiritualities," and for new spiritualities there is today a bull market. On our discontents with ourselves, others, and the world, on our fears about the future, ecogurus offer to rub the balm of essence of soul. Jay McDaniel, author of *Earth, Sky, Gods, Mortals: Developing an Ecological Spirituality*, was featured at Riverside, and the books of the aforementioned Matthew Fox were much in evidence.

Again, none of this should surprise us. Aging activists need a temporary home, a place to keep their weary dreams for a time, before continuing the sojourn toward a world that is the more alluring because it is so elusive. The Environmental Rest Home will have to do for a while. The young who want revolution grasp at the promise wherever it is on offer, even if the revolution, ironically enough, is in the cause of conservation. As for the quest for spiritualities, it is a perennial eruption in human history. Robert Musil, in *The Man Without Qualities*, noted its eruption in the useless lives of the elites of Vienna prior to World War I. In that time, as in ours, there was what Musil says was an "indescribable wave of skim-romanticism and yearning for God that the technological age had for a time squirted out as an expression of spiritual and artistic protest against itself."

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CARING OVER CURING

Talk about cutting off medical treatment for the elderly and you're likely to be condemned as cruel and uncaring. And so, a few years ago, Daniel Callahan of the Hastings Center was condemned for suggesting that public policy should set a point, say age eighty-five, above which no more medical interventions aimed at curing should be attempted. Unfortunately, some important points that Callahan was trying to make got lost in the furor.

A man not easily intimidated, Callahan tries again in a new book, *What Kind of Life* (Simon & Schuster). The gravamen of his argument is that we must make a clear distinction between curing and caring. Everyone is entitled, so to speak, to being cared for, but there is no way for everyone to be cured. Callahan wants us to think anew about what is meant by health care. The "first phase" of progress in health measures, from the seventeenth to early-twentieth centuries, focused on groups rather than individuals. Better nutrition, sanitation, and general living conditions dramatically increased life expectancy. The "second phase" was the virtual conquest of infectious disease by means of vaccinations and antibiotics. That phase, too, marked a big improvement in public health. Now we're in the "third phase," having to do with surgical techniques, intensive care units, improved rehabilitation, organ transplants, and so forth. The third phase, however, has also brought a major increase in chronic disease and illness, mainly related to people living longer.

"It is a mistake to assume," writes Callahan, "that the kinds of successes characteristic of earlier medical history will necessarily be repeated in the future. That so many of the most difficult conditions are associated with aging means also that, given human nature itself, the ragged edge of aging will most likely *always* and *necessarily* generate new debilitating and lethal conditions to replace those earlier reduced or eradicated." Despite all our frantic efforts at the diminishing "ragged edge" to extend life and defeat death, Callahan notes, "death always wins." As for what people are entitled to, Callahan observes: "A society cannot be said to owe its citizens the pursuit of every medical possibility to meet every curative need, much less when the possibilities of doing so are endless."

Callahan is, in large part, making an economic argument. Historically, and compared with other developed nations, the U.S. spends an astonishing and rapidly increasing amount on medicine. Those critics who say that other countries are ahead of us in "guaranteeing quality health care for everyone" overlook the fact that the definition of quality in those countries does not include the panoply of high-tech medicine increasingly taken for granted in America. Whether it be cases of rare and debilitating disease or the chronic illnesses associated with old age, many technical interventions are marginally effective, and are likely to remain so. The immortality project is doomed to failure, and extraordinary measures to defy death consume

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resources that are needed to sustain and strengthen the first two "phases" of health improvement.

Far from being callous, Callahan wants to advance a compassionate and comprehensive understanding of what it means to care. "It is the vulnerability that illness creates that most requires the response of others." Caring is not "a kind of consolation prize," but is highest blessing for both those who give and those who receive. "There is never any certainty that our illnesses can be cured or our death averted. Eventually they will, and must, triumph. Our victories over sickness and death are always temporary, but our need for support, for caring, in the face of them is always permanent." Here Callahan acknowledges the importance of the hospice movement, a movement that has not yet received the support it deserves from the churches and synagogues of America. "The great value of the hospice movement is its contribution to the care of the dying and to opening up, once again, the possibility of accepting illness and death in an affirmative way," Callahan writes. The kind of caring that Callahan calls for requires both a change of individual hearts and a rethinking of the ways that social policy can encourage caring and support caregivers.

What Kind of Life is an important book, worthy of being pondered and challenged. The title is unfortunate, suggesting a "quality of life" argument that assumes some lives are not worth living. Lives not worth living, people may understandably be inclined to think, are not worth caring for. Callahan himself opposes legal measures that would include the unborn in the community of caring. His Hastings Center has also developed troubling guidelines for the care of the dying, guidelines that are less than careful about respecting those at the end of their lives. (For a critique of those and similar guidelines, see Richard John Neuhaus, "The Return of Eugenics," *Commentary*, April 1988.) Thus Daniel Callahan has posed obstacles to his getting the hearing that he deserves when, in the present book, he urges us to think through the differences between curing and caring. Nonetheless, he is raising questions that will become inescapable as we move further into a "third phase" of medicine that is morally doubtful, economically unsustainable, and may well undermine curing and caring alike.

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CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

From time to time in American history the idea has been floated that there should be a "Christian" political party. It has never stayed afloat very long. This is in sharp contrast to Western Europe where, since World War II, Christian Democrats (CD) have played a powerful, frequently dominant, role in Belgium, Holland, West Germany, Austria, and Italy. The reasons for the difference between the European and American situations are several. CD in Europe is mainly a Roman Catholic affair, whereas until recently Catholicism in America was viewed as an immigrant minority in an essentially Protestant country. At least equally important, European politics was shaped by the Revolution of 1789, not our Revolution of 1776. The forces of "progress" and "enlightenment" were powerfully anticlerical and often anti-Christian, pitted against an *ancien régime* that was allied with the church. Christian identity was sharpened by the revolutionary antithesis, whereas in America the revolutionary impulse was itself perceived as being Christian in substance and motive. The "separation" of church and state in Europe was a separation *against* religion, while in America it was, at least originally, a separation *for* religion.

Today the Christian Democrats are riding high in Europe. Their electoral success in mainly Protestant (and mainly Lutheran) East Germany was especially striking. But there are some CDs who think they have been too successful. They have become so preoccupied with keeping power, it is said, that they have lost touch with the religious purposes that brought them into political existence to begin with. Says one Belgian leader: "Christian Democracy has lost its soul and should go into opposition. The leaders now accept anything to stay in power, and they disregard our principles and traditions. They are not helping to renovate our doctrine."

Some CD loyalists worry that the European Community will inevitably bring a closer connection between CDs and British Tories, thus creating a secularized conservative alliance that will further dilute the religion factor in Christian Democracy. This, it is said, will make it more difficult to pursue the goal that Pope John Paul II describes as "reconstituting the soul of Europe." An alternative proposed is for CD members to look, rather, to a closer alliance with Poles, Czechs, and others in Central Europe who, it is hoped, will offer a more promising model of religiously inspired political action.

All the worries about secularization notwithstanding, it seems that in Western Europe the CD parties retain a firm religious base. For instance, in last year's Dutch election 85% of CD voters described themselves as religious; for the Socialists, Liberals, and Democrats '66, the figures were 55%, 40%, and 25% respectively. For another instance, in Italy in 1988 30% of adults claimed to attend church at least once a week, but 50% of CD voters and 75% of delegates to the party's congress did so. The

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conclusion would seem to be that CD parties might well bear the hope of Europe's still-developing political vision, offering a suggestive way of combining religious commitment and political responsibility. And that is of interest not only to Europeans.

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LOOKING FOR FAGIN

All of a sudden, or so it seems, the "scandal" of child labor erupted a couple of months ago. The Secretary of Labor, Elizabeth Dole, garnered huge publicity for launching "sweeps" by armies of investigators checking up on employers who hire the underaged. Congress worked itself up into a moralistic rumble about the need for more punitive laws.

Tim W. Ferguson of the *Wall Street Journal* suggests this might be a good time for some careful thinking. He was not impressed, for instance, by the media indignation directed at a Baltimore man who hired kids to sell candy in poor areas. "Now, much as Dickensian doorbell drives may rankle those blessed enough to be on the receiving end, how might the world appear to a seventh-grader in a subsidized housing complex? Here is a guy who offers a way to sell legal goods for pay that is modest but holds the promise of decent rewards in return for good salesmanship. It is probably a better introduction to the way a contractual society is supposed to work than is available at the deficient local public school or what passes for a playground."

The usual assumption is that child labor is one of those uglies from the dark ages (read, before the New Deal). But Ferguson notes that there is, here and there, an openness to second thoughts. "Scholars such as Robert Lerman of American University, writing for the Progressive Policy Institute, are focusing on the virtues of work at a young age. They have in mind enhanced programs to meld school and job so as to put marginal students on a track to some kind of livelihood. Even if flawed, this is liberalism aimed at rejuvenation not recrimination."

Ferguson concludes that the Labor Department might find better employment for itself than conducting sweeps of local pizza shops to see if teenagers are working overtime. "An alternative mission for a secretary of labor might be to request from her statistics unit the 1988 count showing that of the 599,000 U.S. residents ages 16 and 17, who were recorded as not enrolled in school, nearly 60 percent were not employed. While for many of them a return to the classroom is in order, obtaining a job can be the more urgent and more attainable goal."

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HANNAH ARENDT ASSAULTED

It is only to be expected that the apparent end of the cold war occasions some reauditing of the intellectual books. Consider, for instance, Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, first published in 1951 and now subjected to a thorough trashing by John Lukacs, writing in *New Oxford Review*. *NOR*, as it calls itself (perhaps because it wants to be known as neither this *nor* that), is a journal that combines in sometimes interesting, if not convincing, ways Roman Catholic traditionalism and political leftism. Lukacs' assault on Arendt fits into *NOR*'s running editorial polemic against anti-Communists, cold warriors, neoconservatives, and a shady group known as "the New York intellectuals."

Lukacs does not hide the fact that he is venting a resentment of Arendt that he has harbored for almost forty years. That's a long time to nurture a grudge. He alleges, among other things, that Arendt is guilty of "intellectual dishonesty" and "opportunism" in pandering to fashionable anti-Communism. There is an "essential falseness" in her writing of "total nonsense" that happened to be the nonsense that some New York intellectuals (Norman Podhoretz, for example) wanted to hear at the time. And so the vituperation goes on and on, concluding with this: "But the main purpose of this article is not the denigration of Arendt, no matter how much blackening her reputation deserves. My purpose has been to draw attention yet again to the self-willed—and therefore deep-seated—arteriosclerosis of American intellectual life." Mr. Lukacs has undoubtedly succeeded in drawing attention to his intense dislike of people with whom he disagrees, yet again.

From beneath the bile, one can rescue an intelligent criticism or two that John Lukacs makes of Hannah Arendt. In light of the Revolution of 1989, it is now obvious that Arendt was wrong in her assumption that totalitarian regimes could only become more totalitarian. That was not obvious (as Lukacs, in retrospect, claims it was) from earlier uprisings such as Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. If Arendt is to be criticized for overestimating the inexorable character of totalitarianism and its success in creating "the new totalitarian man," other worthies such as George Orwell might be similarly faulted.

One of the bright lessons emerging from 1989 is

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that Communist regimes are kept in place only by raw force. Withdraw the tanks and machine guns, and the whole preposterous setup is devastatingly exposed. Communism in Russia's captive nations was yet another Potemkin village, and the people now coming out from behind the collapsing stagecraft appear to be relatively undamaged in their essential humanity. Indeed, it may be that their experience of totalitarian inhumanity has graced them with a spiritual and moral sensibility that will turn out to be a great and needed gift to us in the West.

So the good news is that Arendt's worst fears turned out to be unwarranted. The fact remains, however, that she had the courage to break decisively with the left in our political culture, pointing out, for instance, the awful similarities between Hitler and Stalin. Contra Lukacs, making that argument forty years ago took courage. It is an argument that has still not been digested by many intellectuals, also in our churches, who continue to resist the truth that anti-Communism is as morally imperative as anti-Nazism. John Lukacs is in the minority that never needed instruction on the evils of Communism, and it is therefore regrettable that he feels the need to turn so viciously on one who so effectively instructed many who did need it.

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THE POOR: HELPING THEM AND US AT ONE LETHAL STROKE

Paul Sigmund of Princeton has written a carefully calibrated evaluation of liberation theology in Latin America (*Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution?* Oxford). The subtitle indicates Sigmund's appreciation of the ways in which revolutionisms usually turn out to be profoundly antidemocratic. The book analyzes the move of some liberation theologians, notably Gustavo Gutierrez of Peru, away from Marxist ideology, even before the Revolution of 1989 consigned Marxism to the dustbin of history with such rude decisiveness.

Miriam Davidson, a journalist who is a romantic booster of sundry radicalisms, is far from satisfied with Sigmund's study, however. Writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, Ms. Davidson indicates that she's glad enough that, in addition to economic oppression, some liberation theologians are beginning to take sexual oppression seriously. "Yet," she says, "the Latin American liberation theologians have not harshly criticized the Vatican for its stand on birth control and the status of women in the church. It appears that reproductive self-determination would go a long way toward real liberation (especially given the problems of overpopulation in the third world), but this issue has not been addressed by the liberation theologians." She calls on such theologians to challenge the Vatican "as do some priests from the developed North."

In reading Ms. Davidson's criticism, one is impressed again by the uncompromisable centrality of abortion in so much current thinking about the liberated life for both the privileged and the poor. The answer to poverty, it seems, is to reduce the number of poor people, thus liberating them from the burden of life, and us from the burden of them. So at the end of centuries of Enlightenment the progressive solution for our global problems is for parents to kill their children. Dean Swift should have lived to see his modest proposal become establishment orthodoxy.

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BATTLE-READY EXTREMES

There's nothing new in the observation that opposing extremists tend to feed one another, each providing reasons for the other's hysteria. Consider, for instance, the movie *The Handmaid's Tale*, based on a story by Canadian writer Margaret Atwood. A fanatical band of evangelicals has taken over a dreadfully polluted United States, renaming it Gilead. In their theocracy they confine the remaining fertile females to camps where they are forced to be baby breeders. It is an awful world in which women are divided into classes by color-coded clothing, a hypocritical Bible-quoting leadership reigns supreme, and everything good, true, and beautiful is trampled in the dirt. The moral to be drawn is that we must all sign up for the battle against religious fanatics (i.e., Christian conservatives) who are trying to take over our country and destroy our liberties.

As for the response to the film, Ms. Atwood says, "In Canada they said, 'Could it happen here?' In England they said, 'Jolly good yarn.' In the United States they said, 'How long have we got?' " At least that appears to be what the American hysterics with whom Ms. Atwood associates said. And she associates with some of the best. The *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* ran long, fawning, feature stories on the film, its director, stars, and author. In Washington, a host of senators, representatives, and

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assorted celebrities turned out for the premier, many of them pondering to the press about the film's prophetic message for our time. Ms. Atwood assured the *Times* that she wasn't just making this up. "I didn't include anything that had not already happened, was not under way somewhere, or that we don't have the technology to do." What *could* be under way somewhere and what people *might* be able to do are categories of possibility so large as to warrant any fantasy. The psychological term for those who view the world in terms of speculatively threatening possibilities is paranoid.

Vibrant paranoia does not need to be fed by evidence, but confirmations of grotesque fears are gratefully received. Here, for instance, is a mailing from the Coalition on Revival that announces "a new move of God" to create a "Spiritual Army of Christians" to take over sixty major cities in North America in the next twenty years. They are inviting carefully selected "martyr-willing, mighty warriors" to attend "Ministry Merge Seminars" for training in the "National Gameplan." Those who receive the mailing are warned that they most likely won't qualify for these seminars, spineless wimps that they are. We who are less than martyr-ready, mighty warriors are nonetheless told, "You would do well to pray for this attack against the gates of Hell. In this move we are consciously throwing down the Christian gauntlet to the Humanists, Communists, Nazis, New Age Witches, Mafia, ACLU, NOW, NEA, etc., so we, our families, and our ministries will be under special attack by the forces of evil." This is heady stuff.

It is extremist, to be sure, but it hardly justifies the fantasies of Ms. Atwood and her movie. The Coalition sends along a précis of its blueprint for the reconstruction of society on "biblical law," and it looks nothing like *The Handmaid's Tale*. It does look very much like the conventional theonomist fantasy of a world transformed by the rule of the righteous (see "Why Wait for the Kingdom?" May). This fantasy is a long way from the corridors of influence and power. The Coalition mailing comes out of Mountain View, California, while Atwood's fantasy is promulgated by the prestige media and celebrated at receptions on Capitol Hill. The extremists of Mountain View have a half-baked and largely incoherent view of a society that may someday be, while the celebrators of *The Handmaid's Tale* are at the cultural control centers of the society that already is. Between David and Goliath, it would seem that David might have a better excuse for being paranoid.

One extremism calls for a secular crusade to rid public life of the dangers of religion, the other wants a crusade that will subordinate everything to its version of religious law. What they have in common is that they are both monistic: they cannot tolerate a pluralism that involves a complex interaction of reason, conscience, public discourse, and moral judgment drawn from, among other sources, revealed religion. The way of truth, and of public safety, does not lie between these extremisms. It lies, rather, in principled devotion to civil discourse—an open-ended discourse that conscientiously guards against premature closure, engaging varieties of moral vision and recognizing that decisions democratically made are subject to democratic review. That understanding will no doubt be unsatisfactory both to the mighty warriors of the Coalition and to the secularists who cheer Ms. Atwood's slander of evangelical religion. The former refuse to wait for God to put His world to rights, and the second cannot abide the reminder that there is a right that might challenge the indulgence of what they take to be their rights. Although one is viewed as sweated and the other as sophisticated, each continues to feed the other's wildest fears.

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MAXIMUM LEGAL PROTECTION

Many commentators seem to have a hard time understanding that communities of faith are not simply voluntary organizations that democratically make up their rules as they go along. And they seem to have the hardest time understanding that when it comes to the Roman Catholic Church. Thus newspapers routinely consult the crystal ball of survey research and editorially opine that the bishops have lost their leadership legitimacy because many Catholics dissent from church teachings, especially on matters sexual. On abortion, above all, the media seek to replace the church's magisterium with their own teaching authority. Pundits go into a most particular snit when bishops "interfere" with the duties of Catholics holding public office. The idea that bishops are pastors who have a responsibility for the soul welfare also of politicians, the idea that bishops are to help also politicians to form their consciences in accord with their professed beliefs—such ideas are dismissed as a pious guise for partisan power plays.

It is just barely possible that some who cannot abide any statement by a Catholic bishop might listen to conscientious Catholic laypersons on the question of abortion and Catholic officeholders. Mary Ann Glendon, law professor at Harvard, and George Weigel of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington have authored an important statement on this subject, published first in *Newsday*

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and then in other papers around the country. They present six propositions that they dare to believe are valid not only for Roman Catholics in public life. The first is this: "The goal of conscientious Catholic politicians must be the maximum possible legal protection for unborn human life. There can be no compromise here. They must support the principle of the protection of innocent human life and the implementation of that principle in law."

Recognizing the complexities in advancing that goal, Glendon and Weigel say this: "The goal of 'maximum legal protection' will have to be pursued incrementally. Assuring the most comprehensive possible legal protection for unborn life in a given locale is no simple task. Conscientious Catholic politicians will sometimes differ on the best way to translate principle into law.

"A conscientious Catholic legislator may 'settle' for, say, prohibiting sex-selection abortions if that is all that is feasible in a given state. Indeed, that minimal protection establishes a legal beachhead for the principle that human life must be legally respected.

"In most states, on the other hand, it will be possible to enact legislation that brings a state's law into closer conformity with what survey research consistently shows to be the national consensus: That abortion should not be a form of contraception, and that it should be available only for serious reasons that must increase in gravity as pregnancy advances. It is unlikely that the democratic process will yield many statutes as extreme as *Roe v. Wade*, which grants an abortion license that cannot be revoked even in the third trimester of pregnancy, if the woman's 'well-being' is at stake.

"In every locale, in other words, the conscientious Catholic politician will seek the principled recognition of the state's interest in the protection of unborn human life and the maximum possible legal implementation of that principle, given local political and cultural realities. A vigorous and effective strategy of incremental gains does not involve an abandonment of principle. For, according to classic Catholic understandings and the common moral intuitions of the American people, an America in which fewer and fewer abortions are performed each year is morally preferable to the present America, in which there are 1.6 million abortions annually, and rising."

Glendon and Weigel understand the sundry worlds of moral purpose and self-interest that must be addressed in more imaginative ways. "Catholic politicians should build new coalitions in support of protecting innocent human life: Coalitions, first and foremost, with American women—the majority of whom are pro-life—who understand that *Roe*'s abortion license has encouraged irresponsible male sexual behavior more than any other legal act in our history. Coalitions with those Christian and Jewish religious leaders who have stoutly defended the right-to-life of the unborn. Coalitions with the handicapped and the elderly: *Roe*'s lethal logic will, sooner or later, be deployed against others whose lives are deemed 'inconvenient' or worthless."

Their conclusion reflects an understanding of the particular opportunity and obligation of Catholicism in this moment of our common life. "Catholicism has traditionally taught that prudence is the most important of political virtues. Prudence is not a matter of splitting the difference between opposed positions; it is the moral and political art of incorporating principles in public policy.

"The American democratic experiment will be debased and coarsened if it continues to deny the principle of the inviolability of innocent human life. Catholicism in America will be diminished if it does not bring the art of prudence to bear in devising legal approaches to abortion that are compassionate toward pregnant women, protective of unborn life, and directed toward the general welfare." (For a complete text of the Glendon-Weigel statement, write Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1030 15th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.)

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ It's not easy to locate reliable and relatively dispassionate educational material on AIDS. There is now available, however, a video that can be recommended for discussion groups in churches and synagogues. *AIDS: What You Haven't Been Told*, is available for $29.95 (plus $2 shipping) from IDEA, P.O. Box 4010, Madison, WI 53711. Produced by an evangelical Christian group, the film does not so much contain what "you haven't been told" (what, by this point, hasn't been told about AIDS?) as it puts the facts into a sober and sobering context. Caring in tone, the film is devoid of egregious polemic, whether pro or con current homosexual activisms.

■ The Rev. Laszlo Tokes is one of the heroes of the Romanian revolution of 1989. He is the Reformed pastor whose refusal to leave his congregation in Timisoara sparked the popular uprising that, within a few days, brought down the regime of Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. In a recent interview, Pastor Tokes had hard words for Reformed and Orthodox leaders who collaborated with the regime, and for Western church leaders who supported Communist oppression by their silence, or worse. "The error has always been," said Tokes, "that Western church leaders have come here as diplomats.

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Despite being God's servants, they have developed a lifestyle resembling that of the politicians. They did not listen when we told them that also Romanian bishops were agents of Securitate [the secret police]." Tokes is especially critical of the World Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). Romanian Christians, he says, supported the causes they were asked to support, but were not supported in turn. "I remember well," he says, "the assistance we contributed in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. My church stood by the black freedom fighters. Allan Boesak [the South African who is president of WARC] gave us credit for this. However, when the struggle was raging for life or death in Romania, he and the other ecumenical heavyweights let us down. . . . This is my accusation against the churches of the West—our revolution did not come about with their help, but in spite of their unwillingness to fight for the truth." Looking back on the sorry record of many Western Christians during the cold war, Tokes concludes, "I want to ask the international church bodies whether the time has not come to repent and ask for forgiveness."

■ Here is heavy stuff. The United Methodists are considering adopting a "liturgy of hope" for families mourning a miscarried pregnancy. (The Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches have such services at present.) The proposed liturgy refers to the fetus as "this infant, the child of . . ." According to the people in charge, there has been an enormous popular demand for such a service. But of course it touches directly on the divided soul of United Methodism on the question of abortion. It is suggested that there might be an alternative rite for people who do not want the fetus referred to as a child. But, if only a piece of tissue has been ejected, what would be the reason for mourning in the first place? A spokesman for the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR) says that they do not object to the reference to a child having died: "We are in favor of any language that would assist in the process of mourning." Given RCAR's insistence that there is no unborn "child," it would seem that they are compassionately willing to go along with what they believe is a lie if it makes people feel better. The Methodist committee says it has not ruled out developing a "rite of reconciliation" specifically intended for use in cases of abortion. Presumably, the child in question would not be involved in the reconciliation. It is all very confusing, and a sad testimony to the politicizing of religion that stifles the truth even of parents mourning their children.

■ We have written elsewhere about the sometimes virulent, sometimes tempered, anti-Catholicism of the *New York Times* (see "Those Turbulent Bishops," *National Review*, December 31, 1989). And sometimes the *Times*' exhibition of its prejudice is just amusing. When, for instance, the Catholic bishops conference enlisted a public relations firm to help get out its message on abortion, the *Times* was not at all pleased. The op-ed page ran a blistering attack on the bishops by ex-priest Eugene Kennedy, who now preaches psychology at Loyola University. Along the way, Kennedy made some slighting remarks about the public relations business, which, he said, is brought in "when the truth won't do." Some days later, the *Times* gave the bulk of the correspondence column to letters vigorously protesting the Kennedy article—and defending, of course, not the bishops but the public relations business. It would perhaps be unfair to observe that the advertising revenue of the *Times* does not depend upon the good will of the bishops. Perhaps.

■ George E. Grant, the executive director of Coral Ridge Ministries in Fort Lauderdale, objects to our including him in our discussion of Christian Reconstructionism ("The Theonomist Temptation," May). He assures us that, while he has friends and publishing connections among the Reconstructionists, he is in no way a theonomist. Among his other differences with the theonomists, he notes that he rejects their basic hermeneutic of a wholesale acceptance of Old Testament case laws for the ordering of modern society. While there is a "biblical triumphalism" in Dr. Grant's writings that is similar to the Reconstructionist message, we accept his statement that he is not a theonomist and are grateful for the clarification.

■ In the May issue we cited some wise words by Leszek Kolakowski on the subject of religion and the future of democracy. But we said they were from his Jefferson Lecture when, in fact, they were said at a conference sponsored a while back by the National Endowment for Democracy. Just in case any readers were confused by our error.

■ The movie *I Love You to Death* is playing in Allentown, PA, and not everybody is happy about it. It is about Allentown's Tony Toto, a notorious philanderer whose wife hired help to bump him off with a bomb, a bat, and a gun, but none of them worked. The wife served time, the Totos are reconciled, and the movie is doing well at the box office. Then we read this in the *Times*, one of our local newspapers: "Joseph Rosenfeld, assistant director of the city's Department of Community Affairs, said it was 'unfortunate' that the Toto affair was more responsible for putting Allentown on the map than the recent opening of Interstate 78 to New Jersey." Apparently the *Times* had completely missed the big story of the new accessibility of New Jersey to the people of Allentown. Mr. Rosenfeld continues, "I don't have any respect for people who try to kill each other." He adds, "But this is my personal view." Now

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there, in our judgment, you have a state-of-the-art example of the modern virtue of nonjudgmentalism. It might also be described as the pro-choice position on domestic violence.

■ King Baudouin of Belgium made clear in advance that he could not and would not sign into law a bill withdrawing legal protection from the unborn. The Belgian newspapers, which are owned by the several parties protecting their piece of power in the ruling coalition, deemed this news unfit to print. However, one reporter, Paul Belien, managed to get the story out in the European edition of the *Wall Street Journal*, and was consequently fired by his own Belgian paper. Mr. Belien reflects on these developments: "I did make one false prediction, however, in my article for the *Journal*. I concluded that the king's refusal might lead to a constitutional crisis. This did not happen. The politicians just ignored the constitution. [Prime Minister] Martens simply suspended the king's powers for two days and had the government sign the abortion law instead. In order to do this the government invoked Article 82 of the Belgian constitution, which had been used during World War II when the king was in the hands of the enemy—the Nazis—and the government had taken over the king's powers. Apparently, the government supposes that the king is in the hands of the enemy again—not the Nazis, but his own conscience."

■ Aleksander S. Tsipko is one of Mikhail Gorbachev's closest advisers. In a recent interview he offered his views on what the master is up to in dismantling the Communist party and creating something that might begin to look like a democratic polity. According to Tsipko, Soviet "liberalism" seems to be quite similar to what in this country is associated with the conservative call to return to "basics." "When you've destroyed all the natural structures of life—in the family, in the state, in religion—then how can you re-create them?" Mr. Tsipko said. "Only by returning to these simple values, right? So the first forms of socialization are related to these simple things: national awareness, the awareness of the continuity of one's history, the awareness that you're Russian, that you had a state, that Orthodox Christianity is your religion, whether you're a believer or not. We can't do without these things. You have to return the values of the family. And what's most important is that you have to return the values of private property."

The notion that private property is "most important" may reflect a vestigial Marxist bias about the priority of the economic component in social change. Observers are impressed, however, that Gorbachev's program of "liberalization" means bringing into his inner circle (similar to a presidential cabinet) some of the most outspoken conservative critics of both Communism and Western democracy. This encourages speculation that Gorbachev is trying to move the Soviet Union, or at least Russia, to a new order combining market economics, Orthodox religion, and nationalism. As the interviewer notes, nobody seems to know quite what he is up to. "Others speculate that Mr. Gorbachev will emerge from this period a born-again European leftist, or a Swedish social democrat, or a Leninist after all, or a tyrant. For people just now absorbing the reality of what is afoot, it is the political parlor game of the year: what will Mikhail S. Gorbachev be when he does not have to be a Communist anymore?"

■ Robert Wright of *The New Republic* stirred up a storm with "Are Animals People Too?" contending that, measured by sentience, animals have rights much as human beings do. It was pretty sloppy reasoning, we thought, but it's a subject on which it's easy to get an argument. We are told that more than eighty readers wrote in, mainly to disagree with Wright. The editors say that 15 percent were doctors and people connected with medical research, while 12 percent fitted *TNR*'s category of "serious moral philosophers." But then this: "Unsurprisingly, religious believers (8 percent of the total) made the most vociferous objections to an avowedly secular analysis, citing biblical authority to justify humanity's unique position within the animal kingdom." *TNR* knows that they are religious believers because they quote the Bible. Admittedly, we do not know the intellectual and spiritual profile of *TNR* readers, but in a nation where 95 percent of the people say they believe in God and almost as many identify themselves religiously, it seems improbable that only 8 percent of the more than eighty respondents were "religious believers." The editors' figure would seem to assume that religious folk cannot make a public argument without invoking religious authority. Why, we would not be at all surprised if even some of those "serious moral philosophers" think in ways shaped by considerations that *TNR* might deem "religious." It appears that the unsurprisable editors might be surprised, however.

■ A colleague at Harvard passes on this broadsheet issued by the "Coalition for Civil Rights," a group made up of "spokespersons" for myriad ethnic and racial minorities, plus gays, lesbians, and assorted lifestyle liberationisms. The Coalition is calling for a one-day strike of professors and students at Harvard Law School in order to advance "the issue of 'normalization,' or making our school look more like the society in which we live." Readers who are convinced that Harvard really does hate America might cheer this turn of events. They shouldn't. Of all the things that most Americans would likely think abnormal about Harvard, few are so abnormal as what the Coalition for Civil Rights calls "normalization." The strikers' demands for yet more quotas, entitlements, and structured inclusivities make clear that they don't want Harvard to be more like America

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but more like their idea of what America should be like. That might not be a bad goal for a leadership institution such as Harvard. Elites typically view themselves as "normal" and those who differ as deviant. But it does get confusing when one sector of the elite demands that another sector of the elite "normalize" itself in the image of a society that both condemn. There is something very peculiar going on here. But then, some say that's what universities are for.

■ Witness for Peace, a lobby for the former Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, boasts of having sent more than four thousand U.S. citizens on political pilgrimages to that country. Here is a form letter from WFP, noting that the Sandinista era is over, at least temporarily. "Does that mean that WFP's job is finished and that we can end the organization?" The answer, not surprisingly, is: *"Unfortunately not."*

Now that "the U.S.-backed candidate" has won the election, WFP is needed more than ever. "Will they [the U.S.] now end their years of influence and involvement in Nicaragua or will they continue to control another country's destiny and choice by financial support and control of Chamorro?" Indicating an interest in human rights that was not notable in its years of cheerleading for the Sandinistas, WFP declares, *"With your help we can work to be sure Nicaragua does not become a country with overlooked human rights violations."* In WFP and similar literature it is being generally said that U.S. policy succeeded after all—that is, the Sandinistas were toppled. Nicaraguans, we are repeatedly told, did not vote against the Sandinistas but only against the civil conflict and economic misery imposed by the U.S. There is no recognition that maybe people voted against a regime that relentlessly and recklessly provoked the ill will of the U.S. It is as though "they," the mean-spirited U.S., decided it would be fun to be nasty to some nearby country and, willy-nilly, picked on Nicaragua. It is a curious view of politics among nations. Like Witness for Peace, and in part because of Witness for Peace and related organizations, it is a curiosity that will not go away anytime soon.

■ Peruvian novelist and recent presidential candidate Mario Vargas Llosa was once a favorite of the Left, but, like many, he has had some second and third thoughts. Here he reflects on what he thinks he has learned about religion and politics: "The thirst for apocalypse is deeply rooted in human thought. Some cultures are more predisposed to this than others and I think Peruvian culture is among them. In literature and art, apocalypse is presented as the climax of human adventure. I recognize the allure of apocalypse and am fascinated by it. I think in part my commitment, when I was young, to apocalyptic, messianic ideologies was an expression of this. Now, though I am totally convinced that we must try to eradicate messianism and apocalypticism from politics and from social matters, I still think that in some way this temptation of apocalypse will always be with us. I believe that art can channel our appetite for apocalypse; it can find a home for all the ghosts and demons that are inside us. Our apocalyptic appetites become dangerous only when they find expression in politics." (Quoted in *Genesis*, a fine evangelical newsletter put out by Kenneth Myers, formerly our colleague in editing *This World*. A sample copy of *Genesis* is available from Berea Publications, Box 100, Powhatan, VA 23139.)

■ From time to time one comes across a statement that valuably encapsulates overeducated mindlessness. Such a statement requires no extended comment, only a moment to ponder its ramifications. Here is Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, daily book reviewer of the *New York Times*, praising a book by a child psychologist. The psychologist has studied pictures of Abraham and Isaac on the mount of sacrifice, and she notes that they never show Abraham looking at Isaac. "Her point," says Lehmann-Haupt approvingly, "is simply that the time has come for Abraham to stop taking for granted his compulsion to sacrifice Isaac. Parents must turn their eyes to their children, and acknowledge the needs of separate and integral human beings." Think about it.

■ An Eleanor Kleinhans of Bernardsville, NJ, writes the very leftward *Christianity and Crisis* to thank the editors for an article bashing U.S. imperialism. *"C&C is indispensable,"* she says. *"I call you my religious version of The Nation.* That's supposed to be praise!" The last sentence, presumably, in case the editors took it as criticism. Little fear of that. Although, come to think of it, we were recently rebuked for saying the same thing about *C&C*. The lesson is that it's OK to say that *C&C* is the religious version of *The Nation*, if you intend it as a compliment.

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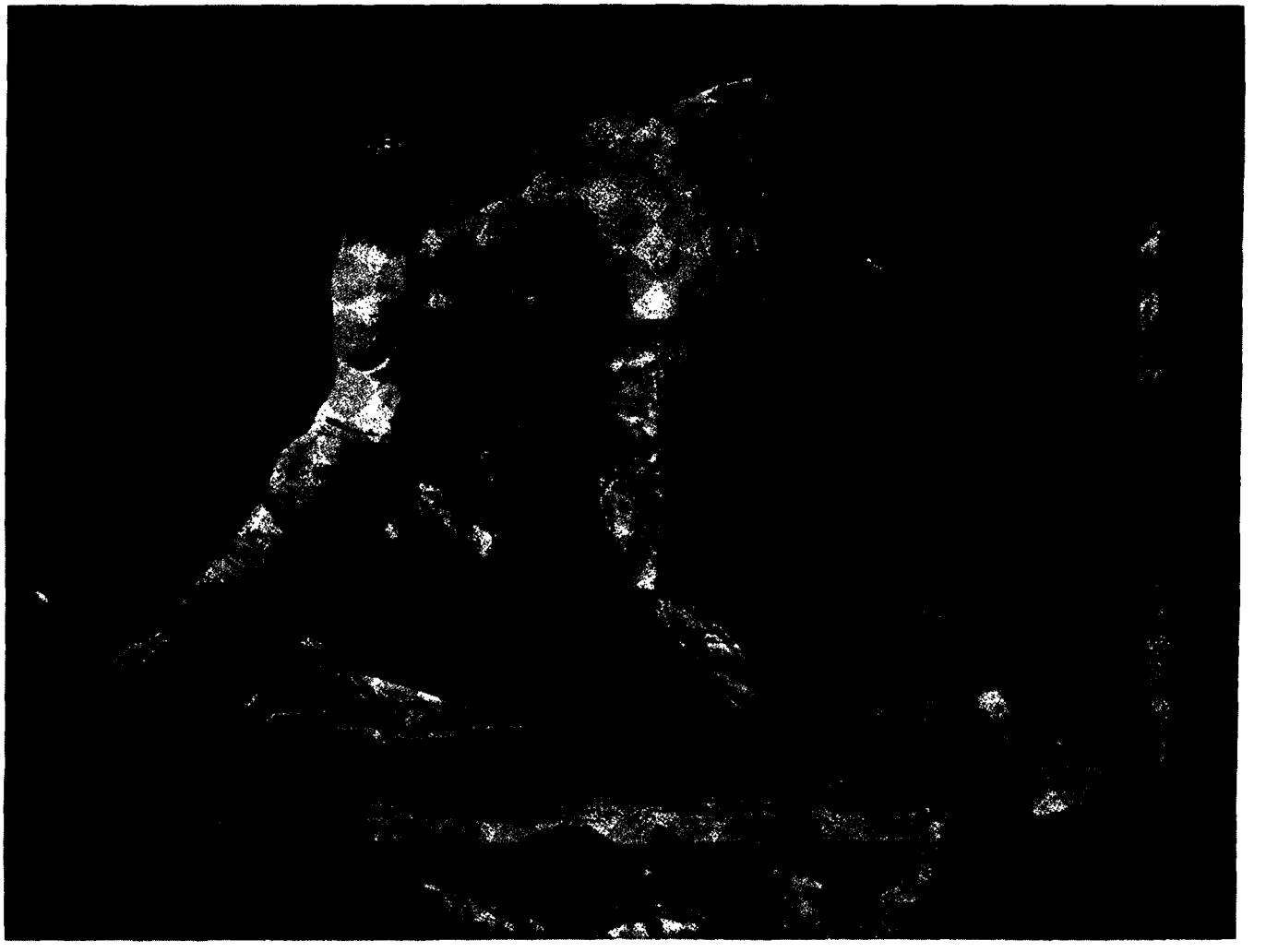
George Bellows, A Stag at Sharkey's, 1917.



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